



University of the Pacific Scholarly Commons

University of the Pacific Theses and
Dissertations

Graduate School


2020

MOVING QUICKLY: ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

Rachel Marie West

University of the Pacific, rachelwest209@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Gifted Education Commons](#), [Secondary Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

West, Rachel Marie. (2020). *MOVING QUICKLY: ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS*. University of the Pacific, Dissertation.
https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds/3678

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of the Pacific Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mjibney@pacific.edu.

MOVING QUICKLY:
ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF
SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

By

Rachel M. West

A Dissertation Submitted to the

Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Benerd College
Curriculum & Instruction

University of the Pacific
Stockton, CA

2020

MOVING QUICKLY:
ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF
SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

By

Rachel M. West

APPROVED BY:

Dissertation Advisor: Thomas Nelson, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Marilyn Draheim, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Katrina Johnson Leon, Ed.D.

Senior Associate Dean of Benerd College: Linda Webster, Ph.D.

MOVING QUICKLY:
ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF
SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

Copyright 2020

By

Rachel M. West

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the course of this program, if you: bought me a drink, fed me, wiped my tears, listened to me rant, bought me a drink, proofread a paper, acted as a cheerleader, bought me a drink, pushed me to finish, gave me a hug, bought me a drink, made me laugh, talked about nerdy things, or bought me a drink...Thank you. I wouldn't have a finished manuscript without your support.

So, too, is this for Chesa and the many students who feel like she did about accelerating through her courses. Go ahead! Add a double major. Postpone that class. Take that internship. Study abroad. The learning doesn't stop, even if the schooling slows down. I promise.

MOVING QUICKLY:
ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF
SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

Abstract

By Rachel M. West

University of the Pacific
2020

The purpose of this interpretive biography was to understand how college graduates perceive their experiences in secondary (high school) accelerated learning programs and the impact of that participation on their continued education. This inquiry was guided by the overarching question: What are college graduates' perceptions and understandings of their experiences in secondary accelerated programs? Using a postmodern philosophy to review the empirical materials, this interpretive biography focused on the lived experience of a college graduate who participated in an accelerated secondary program and focuses on her reflections after graduating from a four-year university. The study finds that generally, secondary accelerated learning programs like concurrent enrollment are considered valuable for their academic preparation, but may be reinforcing societal notions that students should go through their schooling more quickly than is beneficial.

Keywords: Dual enrollment, early college, interpretive biography, accelerated learning, secondary education, postmodernism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	9
List of Figures	10
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
Background	11
Problem Statement	14
Purpose of the Study	15
Research Questions	15
Significance of the Study	16
Theoretical Framework	17
Definition of Terms	19
Chapter Summary	20
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	21
Defining High Schools and Colleges.....	24
Encouragement of Accelerated Learning.....	28
Advanced Placement and Concurrent Enrollment: What Are They?	33
Why Accelerate?	40
What Are the Results of Acceleration?.....	44
Postmodernism: Definitions and Applications	46
Mind the Gap	56
Chapter Summary	57
Chapter 3: Methodology	59
Review of Research Questions	59

Methodology, Approach, and Design	59
Why Interpretive Biography?	62
Respondent Selection Strategies	63
Empirical Materials Collection	65
Analysis of Empirical Materials	68
Researcher Positionality.....	71
Limitations	76
Trustworthiness.....	77
Assumptions.....	79
Chapter Summary	80
Chapter 4: Interpretations	82
Introduction of the Participant: Here's Chesa!	83
Themes	101
Chapter Summary	114
Chapter 5: Conclusions	115
Discussion	114
Implications for Policy and Practice	126
Autobiographical Reflection.....	129
Study Summary.....	131
References.....	133
Appendices	
A. Informed consent (main participant).....	147
B. Informed consent (relevant adults of participant)	149

C. Main participant interview protocol.....	151
D. Main participant journal prompts.....	152
E. Relevant adults interview protocol.....	153
F. Telephone recruitment script – main participant	154
G. Telephone recruitment script – relevant adults	155

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. High School and College Graduation Statistics.....	42
2. Impact of family duty on accelerated learning	104
3. Impact of social relationships on accelerated learning	107
4. Impact of accelerated learning on academic readiness	111
5. Academic challenges and regrets.....	113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1. Secondary Students as Citizens in the Bounded System of Education..... 18
2. Timeline of Major Events in Accelerated and Secondary
Education Since 1890 23
3. Differences Between Affirmative and Skeptical Postmodernists..... 49

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Due to an increasing number of educational options at the secondary level in the United States, more and more families are electing to send their children to public schools with non-traditional programming options; numbers of students enrolled at charter schools, in schools with specialty programs, or homeschooled has risen steadily over the past two decades (Bielick, 2008; Waits, Setzer, & Lewis, 2005).

In addition to the choices listed above, many families choose to enroll students in accelerated learning options. Accelerated learning is defined as “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than typical” (Pressey, 1949, p. 2). Many accelerated learning options are geared toward students who are considered gifted or highly motivated (Southern & Jones, 2004), but more often, some are executed in non-traditional schools that have been founded through grants, charters, or other privatized methods. At the secondary level, accelerated learning includes Advanced Placement (AP) and concurrent enrollment programs, all of which will be explained in the background section of this chapter. Though not available at all schools in the United States, the background and literature review sections will show that such programs are often offered through specialty schools or housed on traditional campuses and offered to a select population.

Background

Accelerated learning at the secondary level allows students to “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than typical” (Pressey, 1949, p. 2) and has been present in American public education in some form or another since the mid-1800s. Many

recent studies addressing the topic of accelerated programming use Pressey's (1949) definition (Colangelo et al., 2010; Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Southern & Jones, 2004).

There are a variety of options at every academic level that can be called "accelerated learning" (Southern & Jones, 2004), but the Advanced Placement program and other college course enrollment programs during high school are most commonly used and accepted in secondary education (Speroni, 2011a). Accelerated learning options are offered at many traditional public high schools, private schools, public charter schools, or school-within-schools. Because of their exclusivity, marketing, college preparatory curriculum, and/or funding, they are also causing competition for traditional high school programs (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Weil, 2000). Typically, such programs are promoted both by outside educational organizations and/or their sponsoring organizations. They are also determined as successful or unsuccessful based on determinants like student test scores on standardized exams, college credits accumulated, and/or college graduation rates.

While accelerated learning can take a variety of forms, for the purpose of this study, I will focus on two nationally tracked options: 1) Advanced Placement (AP) as administered by the College Board company and; 2) concurrently enrolled students in both high school and college courses, focusing specifically on concurrent enrollment within the Early College High School model. Concurrent enrollment is often called dual enrollment in the related literature, but for simplicity, this study will reference only concurrent enrollment. The similarity in missions between these establishes them as comparable in their impact on accelerated learning, despite their programmatic differences. The targets of AP courses and concurrent enrollment programs are to enable students to demonstrate mastery of and complete college coursework before their high school education is completed. Both options are recognized as secondary accelerated

learning options by Southern and Jones (2004), but cautiously, as these programs enable acceleration later on in schooling; they don't officially offer an increased pace for completion of the particular content being delivered. For example, most traditional college courses take a semester to complete, and while concurrently enrolled high school students may be taking both high school and college courses, they are still taking traditional courses that are in line with their chronological grade and their college courses are still taking them a semester to complete. AP students may be taking an end of course exam to demonstrate mastery of content, but they are still likely to be in high school for the expected four years. While fitting the definition of acceleration as posited by Pressey (1949), the acceleration of these programs happens after high school, when students do not have to take as many courses to complete their college degrees. This is not considered as harmful as some other forms of acceleration (Southern & Jones, 2004).

Early College High Schools are by definition, concurrent enrollment programs, allowing students to take high school and college courses at the same time and enabling students to graduate from high school having already completed a portion of the credits required for a college degree. The Early College High School Initiative was officially launched in 2002, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Its mission was to enroll students who are “low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education” (Webb & Mayka, 2011, p. ii). A main draw of these schools is that all students who attend take coursework to allow them to complete required high school courses and two years of college credit (sometimes even an Associate of Arts Degree) within four years. They are typically small schools of no more than 400 students, and most are located on college campuses (Webb & Mayka, 2011). The initiative to begin these schools in 2002 “received more than \$120 million in start-up funding from the Bill

and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation” (Kisker, 2005, p. 69). In 2011 (Webb & Mayka), there were “More than 210 early college schools now [serving] nearly 50,000 students in 24 states” (p. 1). They are not the first of their kind, however, and will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter Two.

Concurrent enrollment programs are not the same as Advanced Placement courses, in which students must take an end of course exam to prove competency, potentially enabling them to receive college credit after high school graduation. The College Board company has facilitated the Advanced Placement program since 1955, and though it might be considered a concurrent enrollment program, within this study it will remain a separate, distinct, accelerated learning program of its own. The College Board program keeps thorough results related to exam passage and proficiency, and college credits are awarded on an end of exam course score. AP exam passage does not always indicate college credits, as individual universities have their own policies for awarding credits based on exam scores. Statistics kept related to concurrent enrollment programs are focused more on enrollment in courses, college credits achieved through those courses, and variety of implementation processes. Thus, the comparison of statistics is impossible. One thing is clear: both of these types of acceleration allow for students to “get ahead” on college credits, though students have to do varying levels of additional work to obtain college credits in each of these programs.

Problem Statement

Accelerated learning programs enable students to move through their schooling faster, but it is still unclear if there is any long-term impact of such acceleration on students and/or on society. In the last ten years, Advanced Placement exam numbers have doubled, from 1.2

million students in 2004-2005 to 2.4 million in 2014-2015 (College Board, 2014a), while approximately 1.2 million students within a concurrent enrollment program took courses for college credit during the 2010-2011 school year (Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). While this seeming increase in levels of education may indicate that the American populace is more educated overall, the numbers of students obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher only went up 3% between 2009 and 2013, and just under 10% between 2000 and 2013 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013). It's clear from these statistics that despite the dramatically increasing numbers of secondary students taking and completing college credits, there is not a similar dramatic widespread increase in degree obtainment. These numbers are even smaller when looking at subsections of students of color or socioeconomic status. Understanding why students who participate in accelerated learning programs go on to complete college and obtain degrees is a critical piece of being able to reach those students who do not.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how college graduates perceive their experiences in secondary (high school) accelerated learning programs and the impact of that participation on their continued education.

Research Questions

This inquiry is guided by the overarching question:

What are college graduates' perceptions and understandings of their experiences in secondary accelerated programs?

Additional sub-questions are:

1. In what ways do college graduates perceive value from their experiences in secondary accelerated learning programs?

2. In what ways did participation in a secondary accelerated learning program impact the college experiences of college graduates?

Significance of the Study

While there have been studies related to accelerated learning programs published, many tend to be quantitative and focus on student achievement as defined by standardized tests or course completion (Berger, Adelman, & Cole, 2010; Karp et al., 2007; Khazem & Khazem, 2014; Speroni, 2011a; Speroni, 2011b), student retention and perception (Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Edmund, Willse, Arshavsky & Dallas, 2013; Hall, 2013), and/or college readiness, attainment, and influence on the institution (An, 2013; Kinnick, 2012; Martin, 2013). These types of studies focus solely on experimental or correlational data, rather than the lived experiences of the individuals who participated in such programs. Qualitative studies related to this topic are typically case studies of a single school or program and focus on the student experience within the accelerated program (Cravey, 2013; Howley, Howley, Howley & Duncan, 2013; McDonald & Farrell, 2012; Noble, Arndt, Nicholson, Sletten, & Zamora, 1998; Ongaga, 2010), and do not look at the long term effects of program participation after college graduation.

As more schools offer some version of accelerated programming for high school students (Edmunds, J.A., Willes, J., Arshavsky, N., & Dallas, A., 2013), this will mean more graduates entering the workforce having experienced some form of accelerated learning program. Understanding what this demographic has experienced and now reflect on these experiences could be important in creating future educational policies, designing schools and curricula, or better understanding American society as a whole. Additionally, understanding why students go forward with degree attainment after accelerated learning programs may further the dialogue about how to better serve those students who are not.

In addition to teachers, decision-makers who influence the landscape of education within the United States are constantly being bombarded with new and improved ways to support student achievement. Because college has “[become] less affordable over the last 20 years” (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016, p. 2), there are many public and private programs being created or expanded to financially support the need for an educated workforce. State and federal policymakers who affect education legislation, local city and district officials who choose programs for their communities, and school administrators and counselors who provide program recommendations to students should all be aware of the benefits and drawbacks of any possible accelerated learning program they are considering.

Above all, this study is designed to help myself and my colleagues across the nation, as veteran public school teachers who work daily in accelerated learning high schools, to understand the impact of the sequence of education in the United States. Those educators who may be simultaneously encouraging some students to finish faster because of social or economic reasons, but holding significant concerns about how to create ways for teachers to encourage deeper critical thought in their students (Ennis, 1993; Paul, 1989, Tempelaar, 2006)... these are for whom this study is truly for.

Theoretical Framework

As explained in further detail in chapter two, this study views accelerated learning through the use of postmodern theory, though postmodernism varies widely, making it difficult to find true consensus on a definition (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bloland, 2005; Lather, 1991; Rosenau, 1992; Slattery, 2000). There are no keywords or phrases for researchers to find in discussions of postmodernism; each author interprets it in their own way. The question is not what postmodernism is, as there is no right way to look at it, the question is how it is being used

in this study. In the instance of this interpretive biography, the focus on the deconstruction of language and the notion of storytelling, and a postmodern view of time are two critical ideals of postmodernism that are discussed and later used during data analysis.

Lyotard (1979) said that “Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable” (Lyotard, 1979, p. xxv). As a concept, Early College High Schools are different from traditional expectations of secondary schooling. This study operates under the beliefs that 1) school levels (elementary, secondary, and postsecondary) are their own bounded systems, 2) all students who participate in formal schooling are citizens within these bounded systems, and 3) ECHS students are dual citizens. These citizens are more likely to enter the workforce at a faster speed than those within traditional schooling options. To better visualize these beliefs as related to Early College High Schools, refer to Figure 1.

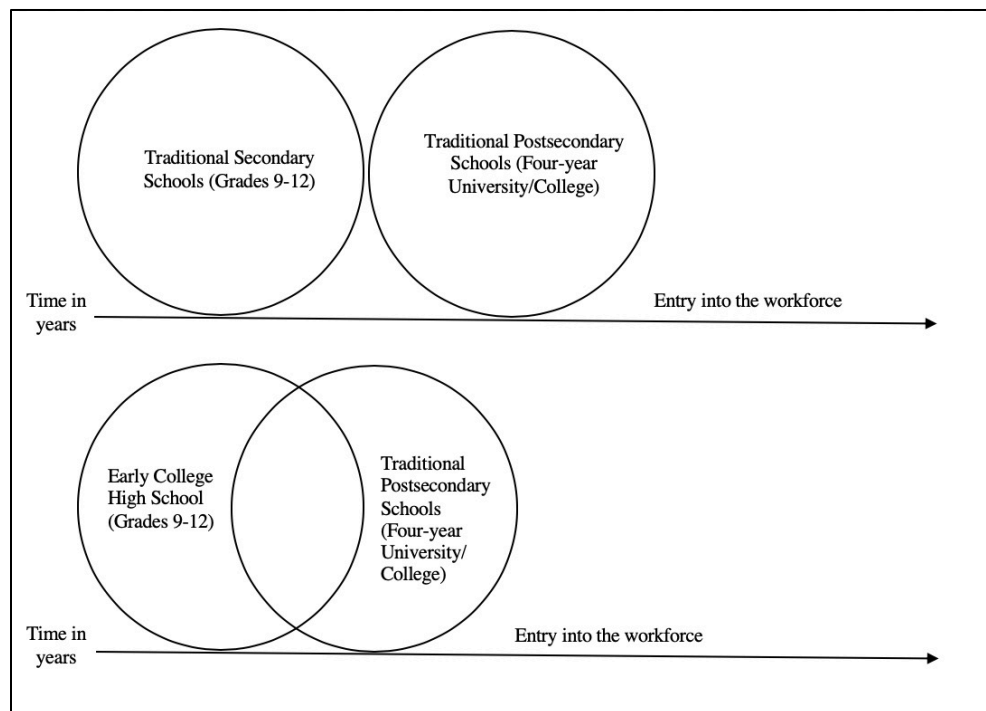


Figure 1. Secondary students as citizens in the bounded system of education.

When reviewed in conjunction with Lyotard's (1979) belief above, as well as the societal narrative that all students need a college degree to “get ahead” in life and the workforce, the choice to look at the dual citizenship of ECHS students within this study becomes a necessary one; why is it a societal belief within the United States that students should move through the bounded systems of education quickly? Lyotard (1979) believes that "decision-makers...allocate our lives for the growth of power...The legitimation of that power is based on its optimizing the system's performance – efficiency" (p. xxiv). Thus, the very notion of researching Early Colleges is postmodern: attempting to understand a system that is designed for students who are desirous of a more efficient way to move through the bounded systems and into the workforce, all within a structure created by a foundation owned by one of the richest decision-makers in the world...this deconstruction is the very nature of postmodernism.

Definition of Terms

- Accelerated learning: “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than typical” (Pressey, 1949, p. 2), meaning being able to go more quickly through the standard course of education as mandated by schools, districts, or society.
- Advanced Placement: A formal program “administered by the College Board. Students can potentially earn college credit by taking an AP exam because many colleges will give credit if a student gets a high enough score” (Bailey & Karp, 2003, p. 5).
- Concurrent enrollment: also known as dual enrollment, describes when students are enrolled at both a high school and college simultaneously, taking classes at each school and receiving both high school and college credits (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005).
- Credit-based transition programs: An umbrella term, this applies to any full program that “allows high school students to take college courses and to earn college credit while still in high school” (Bailey & Karp, 2003, p. vii).
- Early College High School: “small, autonomous institutions that combine high school and the first 2 years of college into a coherent educational program” (Kisker, 2005).
- Gifted: “young people who have an enhanced capacity to learn” (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, p. 4)

- Secondary education: For this study, secondary includes only grades 9-12, as these are the grades that currently affect students' college acceptance in most United States colleges.

Chapter Summary

Accelerated learning programs at the secondary level consist, amongst many others, credit-based transition programs, more specifically Advanced Placement and Early College High Schools. Students are becoming involved in these programs at higher numbers than ever before and completing more college credits while in high school. The numbers of bachelor's degrees, however, are not increasing in similar capacities. Speaking to college graduates who participated in accelerated learning programs during high school may help understand and better serve students who are not completing their degree attainment, despite completing accelerated learning programs. Understanding students of Early College High Schools as "dual citizens" will allow for postmodern analysis of the data collected.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Accelerated learning programs have been discussed, deconstructed, and analyzed in many capacities over the last 150 years. More specifically, accelerated learning research has explicated how acceleration encompasses over a dozen forms of implementation (Colangelo, Assouline & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2004; Southern & Jones, 2004), impacts students in a variety of ways (Combs & Sáenz, 2016; Gross, 2004; Lubinski, Webb, Morelock & Benbow, 2001; Rogers, 2007; Robinson, 2004), and has been around for decades in varied forms (Koos, 1925; Kisker, 2005; Pressey, 1949; Tannenbaum, 1958; Weschler, 2001). The implementation and/or impact of accelerated programming have been researched both qualitatively (Combs, 2016; McDonald & Farrell, 2012; Noble et al, 1998; Ongaga, 2010;) and quantitatively (An, 2012; Berger, et al, 2010; Boazman & Saylor, 2011; Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky & Dallas, 2013; Haxton et al, 2016; Howley, Howley, Howley & Duncan, 2013; Khazem & Khazem, 2014; Martin, 2013; Speroni, 2011a; Speroni, 2011b). They are often discussed within the frame of serving gifted children (Pollins, 1983; Robinson, 2004; Tookey, 1999).

As these programs continue to evolve in an ever-changing American society, the long-term impact of these programs on individual participants is rarely discussed within a larger, societal, context. Additionally, studies that do focus on long-term effects tend to look at academic achievement or educational attainment, rather than individual or societal impact. Though socio-emotional states are researched (Boazman & Saylor, 2011; Pollins, 1983; Robinson, 2004), there is either a focus on the profoundly gifted (Lubinski, Webb, Morelock & Benbow, 2001; Lubinski, 2004), the relationship of a specific program on a student's emotional health (Edmunds, Willse, Ashabsky & Dallas, 2013; Martin, 2013; Ongaga, 2010), what happens

when gifted students are accelerated (Noble et al, 1998), or how school culture impacts students and their potential academic achievement (Cravey, 2013; Edmunds et al. 2017).

As stated in the previous chapter, this study seeks to better understand: “What are college graduates’ perceptions and understandings of their experiences in secondary accelerated programs?”. Secondary questions are: "In what ways do college graduates perceive value from their experiences in secondary accelerated learning programs?" and "In what ways did participation in a secondary accelerated learning program impact the college experiences of college graduates?". This differs from the current literature on the topic and will provide another voice in the scholarship about accelerated learning at the secondary level and does not focus on a specific program’s evaluation or impact. Rather, the focus will be on acceleration’s impact on an individual overall.

This review of literature will provide historical and current context for secondary accelerated learning programs. It first discusses the historical underpinnings of high school and college timelines and credit obtainment, the origins of the high school versus junior college debate, then explains what accelerated learning is and how it has become more present in American education. (For a concise list of dates and events, see Figure 2.) It then focuses on acceleration specifically through Advanced Placement (AP) and concurrent enrollment through Early College High Schools, though there are a number of ways to accelerate learning (Southern & Jones, 2004). This choice of focus is due to 1) their prevalence at the secondary level, and, 2) the commonalities that these programs have both with each other and with how they are standardized from school site to school site. Finally, I explain postmodernism, the underlying philosophy of this study, finishing with an explanation of how current scholarship will benefit from this research.

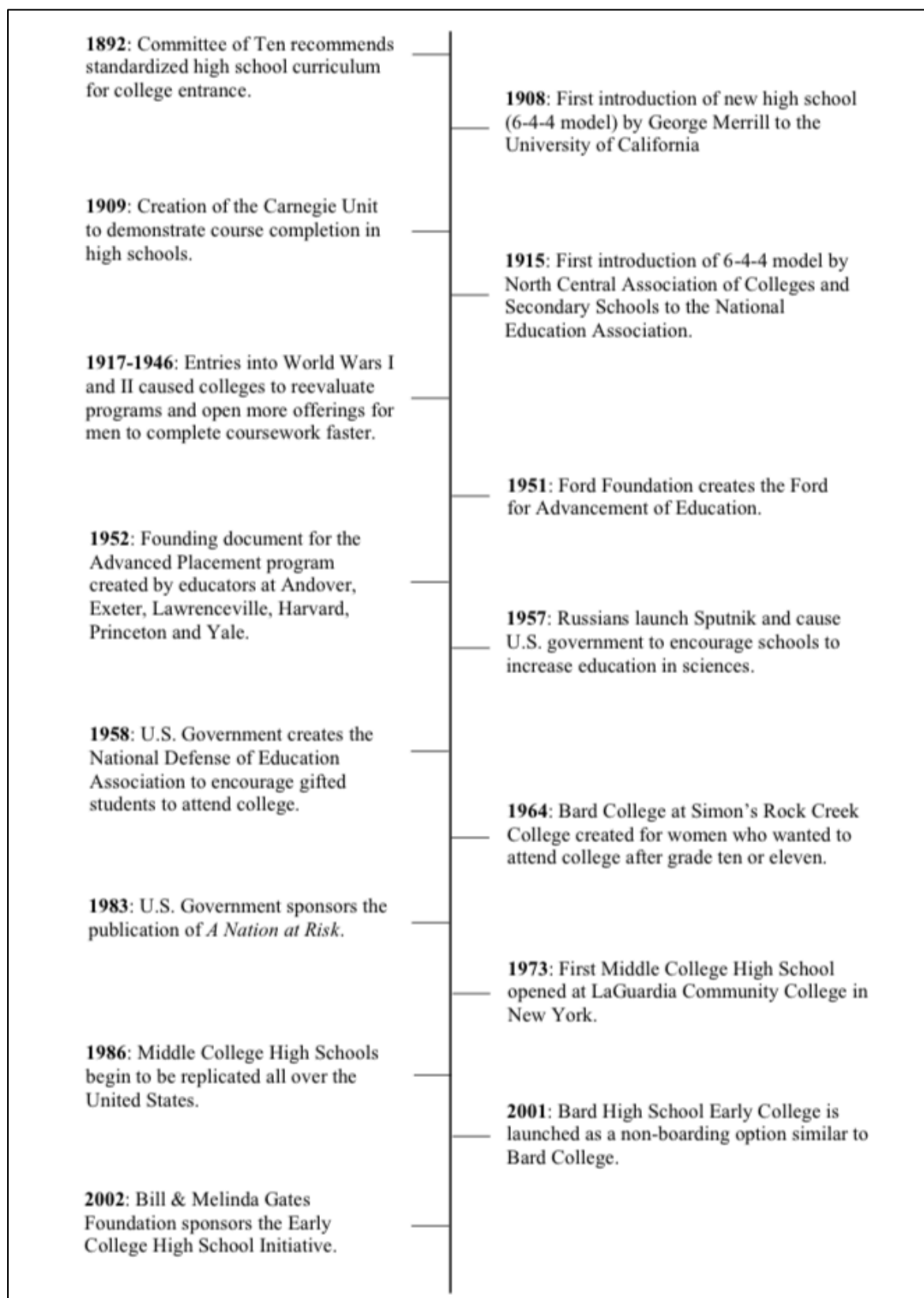


Figure 2. Timeline of major events in accelerated and secondary education since 1890.

Defining High Schools and Colleges

Going back to the mid-1800s, scholars in the United States have been attempting to understand distinctions between "high school" and "college" instruction in terms of course content, student ability, and the time needed to comprehend and complete such coursework. The Committee of Ten – led by then Harvard President Charles Eliot and supplemented with faculty from other elite universities and secondary programs –argued for the improvement of college preparation studies through a standardized curriculum in high schools starting in 1892 (National Education Association, 1894). While advocating for a junior college system, Leonard Koos (1925a) discovered that there was very little difference between course work in grades 11 and 12 and that of “college” course work at grades 13 and 14 in areas of chemistry and economics. In 1952, the combined faculties of elite boarding schools were concerned about the boredom of their (wealthy male) students during their first one-two years at universities. Historically, students started university years much earlier than they currently do, and “The median age of entering Freshmen at Harvard University during the period 1829-32 was a little over sixteen years” but “by 1880 the median age at entrance had advanced to about eighteen and a half years” (Koos, 1942, p. 495). What is important to note, however, is that it wasn't until the adoption of the Carnegie unit that college admission requirements became more difficult to fulfill (Koos, 1942), in part explaining the later age of freshman students as time went on.

Created by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and formally adopted in 1909, a Carnegie unit “is a device for measuring high school work in terms of credits based on time spent in the classroom...imposed on the high schools by efforts of the colleges and universities to standardize admission procedures” (Tompkins & Gaumnitz, 1954, p. 4). Until this point, high schools taught what they believed important and colleges treated courses from

different schools with equal weight. The Carnegie Unit was an attempt to regulate and measure what students knew upon entry to college, as well as a way to create standardization of curriculum. The Carnegie Foundation further proposed that 14 units (one unit being equal to 120 hours of class time) should constitute the minimum amount of preparation in high school, as well as defining a high school as a “4-year preparatory institution not connected with, or part of, a college or university” (Tompkins & Gaumnitz, 1954, p. 7). In addition, colleges were defined as having:

1. At least six professors giving their entire time to college and university work,
 2. A course of four full years in liberal arts and sciences, and
 3. Required for admission not less than the usual four years of academic of high school preparation, in addition to the pre-academic or grammar school studies.
- (Tompkins & Gaumnitz, 1954, p. 7)

While it would have been acceptable for high schools and universities to spurn the Carnegie unit, money talks. The Carnegie Foundation would not provide income to colleges to be paid to their professors for retirement allowances if their college 1) did not meet its definition of a college, and 2) did not use the Carnegie Unit to admit students, making a compelling reason for the schools to fall in line; thus, high schools were then compelled to also fall in line if they wanted their students to be accepted into said colleges (Tompkins & Gaumnitz, 1954).

These highly impactful recommendations of the National Education Association and the Carnegie Foundation changed secondary education and had far-reaching implications on the American educational landscape. They created timelines for course completion in high school that was a minimum of four years, but potentially up to six. They focused on college-bound students and made recommendations for standardized amounts of time to spend in classes and subject areas (National Education Association, 1894; Tompkins & Gaumnitz, 1954).

Further Debate: Junior High, High School, or Junior College?

As the previous section illustrates, determining the lines between coursework in primary, secondary, and post-secondary work has been debated for over one hundred years, and the ongoing need of government and other educational entities to organize and categorize grade levels into units somewhat based on chronological age remains in the present day.

Throughout the early 1900s, the debate became even more complex, as the discussion over how long each unit (primary, secondary, post-secondary) of education should take students. Starting in approximately 1905, the addition of a junior high school and junior college to possible educational units became a major topic of discussion for educational stakeholders (Koos, 1925b). This became what is now known as the 6-4-4 movement, but at the time was simply called “new high schools” in the first documented proposal by George Merrill (University of California, 1908), Director of the Wilmerding School in San Francisco and nationally recognized advocate for vocational education. Built on a hope to have boys’ education better align with the ages of apprenticeship, Merrill proposed that elementary school end at grade six, that schools “Create a new intermediate or secondary school” from grades seven to ten, and “the last two grades of the present high school should be grouped with the two lowest grades of the present college course” to create new high schools (University of California, 1908, p. 71-72). It would be this new high school model, Merrill proposed, that would be responsible for technical and trade training for boys. These high schools, he argued, could then be differentiated by their end goals, creating “some trade schools, some classical schools, some pre-medicine” (University of California, 1908, p. 72), etc. While this proposal manifested from a goal to keep students in school and not drop out to go to work, it was self-serving, as it was to not only help support the current mission of the school but also furthered Merrill's arguments about vocational education

in California at that time. This 1908 plan was presented “a year or two before establishment of the first separate junior high schools” (Koos, 1946, p. 3).

The first organizational recommendation for a changed system came from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools at their twentieth Annual Meeting in 1915. The later-named “6-4-4 plan” was a desired reorganization for educational structures to configure schooling units into six years in elementary school, a lower secondary school that included grades seven to ten, and an upper secondary school into grades 11 and 12, including “the freshman and sophomore years of the usual American colleges” (North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 1915, p. 28). This was well-received, though changes to the structure were not necessarily immediate. One main reason that the 6-4-4 movement gained traction at all was related to “two other vigorous and contemporaneous movements, junior high school reorganization and the advent of junior colleges in large numbers” (Koos, 1946, p. 1). While there are several reasons that junior colleges began (Pederson, 2000; Wechsler, 2001), the focus of this literature review shall remain on those details with the most impact on the blending of junior college and high school curricula. The strongest argument for creating a 6-4-4 model was the overlap of college and high school academic content.

In Leonard Koos’ (1925a) study reviewing the curricular offerings of 26 high schools and 41 colleges in 11 states, Koos (1925a) found that in the areas of chemistry and economics while “the courses on the two levels are far from identical, they have enough in common to warrant concern” (p. 332), and that “the college courses exceed the high-school courses in quantity; but in the nature and distribution of content the two levels of courses overlap extensively” (p. 333). He presented similar beliefs after reviewing college catalogs and similarities between high school and college curricula in the areas of English literature and composition, elementary

French, algebra, and American history (Koos, 1925a). The main idea from the study and Koos' bottom line are the same: “most of the high school subject-matter is a heritage from collegiate curricula,” (p. 332) and “subject after subject has been depressed, usually without dilution, from college to high school” (p. 333). With a 14.9% rate of repetition between high school and college coursework (Koos, 1925a), enrollment in public high schools doubling each decade between 1900 and 1940 (Weschler, 2001), and 70,000 students enrolled in junior colleges by 1930 (Weschler, 2001), educational reformers turned their sights towards the junior college and high school overlap. Understanding the many concerns educational stakeholders have about organizing grade levels should also help show why the topic of accelerated learning – whether labeled as such – is connected to understanding how students progress through academic content.

In addition to the academic reasoning to support making such timeline decisions, it is also apparent that some advocates for increasing the speed students could progress through schooling were social. Research articles at the time discuss the ways that young men who wished to attain careers that required longer training times were becoming too old while going to school and needed to take less time for vocational education, and should be allowed to get out into the world sooner (Flesher & Pressey, 1955; Pressey, 1944; Pressey 1962; Taylor, 1952; University of California, 1908). Additionally, there was an added bonus to women who accelerated: they could obtain at least some college and still get married at a decent age (Flesher & Pressey, 1955; Pressey, 1944; Pressey 1962).

The Encouragement of Accelerated Learning

Accelerated learning is defined as “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than typical” (Pressey, 1949, p. 2). This widely accepted definition of acceleration is the one used throughout this study. After reviewing how four-year, credit-based

high schools were established in the first section, it should be apparent that the typical timelines for secondary programs have been manipulated throughout history but usually ranged in a four to six-year time span.

Generally, accelerated learning options have been typically geared toward *gifted* or *highly motivated* students (Southern & Jones, 2004), and under the current model, some are executed in non-traditional schools that have been founded through grants, charters, or other privatized methods. Accelerated schooling is not a new phenomenon, and by understanding the historical reasons for acceleration we can better understand the current forms. As a result of the multiple decisions made over time from the 1800s to the present regarding the standardization of high school education, there were significant cultural events throughout history that also impacted the timing of high school and college.

As is true with any topic that can be considered a movement, the major events that impacted the accepted timeline for the high school to college transition were wars; “The basic concept was simple: like industry, higher education should increase its productivity to meet the national need,” (Pressey, 1944, p. 34). Because more time was an acceptable way to increase production (i.e. factories staying open longer to produce goods), colleges began offering summer classes after the United States entered World War II (Pressey, 1944). However, after the need for this particular reason to accelerate passed, “most of these programs seemed quickly to have been dropped, and most educators seemed desirous to forget the topic as quickly as possible” (Flesher & Pressey, 1955, p. 228).

In 1957, the Russian space program launched Sputnik, and also launched a full-scale effort by the United States government to promote science and math achievement in public schools; Russian scientists would not outdo us! Shortly after, in 1958, the National Defense

Education Act (NDEA) was established. The overall intention of the NDEA was to find gifted young people, provide them with loans to afford a liberal arts college, provide better educational opportunities, and improve the entire process through supportive administration (Flemming, 1960). While not commonly mentioned in much of the literature about the Sputnik launch and the influence on national education, “the launch of Sputnik translated to a veritable windfall for gifted education. Nearly overnight gifted children achieved an elevated status and recognition not observed since the establishment of the field in the 1920s and 1930s” (Jolly, 2009, p. 39).

Slightly before Sputnik, the outbreak of the Korean War and the Cold War also played a major role in pushing for the development of more academically rigorous courses (Rothschild, 1999). As a way to fight communism, a more educated populace was desired, and “in 1951, the Ford Foundation responded to the crisis by creating the Fund for the Advancement of Education (FAE)” (Rothschild, 1999, p. 176). The FAE encouraged the development of pre-induction to college - a process in which young men would be allowed to enter college at the age of 16 to complete two years of higher education before they were eligible for the draft. However, as this was poorly received by many in public education, the foundation changed direction and helped sponsor the "General Education in School and College: A Committee Report by Members of the Faculties of Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton and Yale" (Taylor et al, 1952), which became the founding document for the current AP program.

The 1980s saw an increasing concern about the quality of secondary education for American students. A key document in allowing politicians and private business entrée into “fixing” the perceived problems in education through testing, training programs, and governmental reforms, *A Nation at Risk* argued that the educational system in the United States was on the decline and in need of reform. It claimed that “the average graduate of our schools

and colleges today is not as well-educated as the average graduate of 25 or 35 years ago, when a much smaller proportion of our population completed high school and college” (Gardner, 1983, p. 11) and caused panic in politicians and educational stakeholders. Using adult and child illiteracy rates, international comparisons between US students and other countries, achievement levels on multiple standardized tests, and increases in remedial math courses at the college level, the report then advocated commitment in the nation to life-long learning and promoting excellence, which they defined at the individual, school, and societal levels. This document promoted the shift towards an educational landscape that pushed for testing, standardization, and achievement; it became ‘The Source’ cited when justifying education reform and promoting more rigorous and challenging courses for students. The text of *A Nation at Risk* scared politicians and caused them to create sweeping policy reform within the Reagan administration, which was then continued by Presidents G.W. Bush, Clinton, G.H.W. Bush, and Obama.

Consistently referenced as playing a major role in the negative shift towards a climate of national curriculum, school privatization, and standardized testing (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Gabbard & Atkinson, 2007; Gelberg, 2007; Hess, 2005; Leistyna, 2007; Manna, 2002; Molnar & Garcia, 2007; Saltman, 2014a), *A Nation at Risk* changed the conversation about public education forever, and some believe that the “report represented the first stage in restoring schools to their traditional role of servicing the demands of economic elites” (Gabbard & Atkinson, 2007, p. 100). Instead of answering the question of how to further help all students, *A Nation at Risk* served to increase the deficit model of public education begun by the launch of Sputnik. It also gave politicians an entry point to further their own agendas, using its argument to their own ends.

Scholars argued that *A Nation at Risk* manufactured more of a crisis in education than existed at the time (Benbow & Stanley, 1996; Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Saltman, 2014a). Furthermore, it was a political hot topic, splitting “the Reagan White House. Attorney General Ed Meese and other conservatives complained that while Reagan’s education agenda consisted of vouchers, tuition tax credits, restoring school prayer and eliminating the U.S. Department of Education, the report said not one word about those” (Bracey, 2008, p. 83).

Despite the recommended improvements to American education in *A Nation at Risk* that may be considered valid on the surface (i.e. improving teacher preparation programs and supporting student participation in the performing arts), many were discontent with the recommendations ignoring “the relatively poor performance of America’s brightest students” (Benbow & Stanley, 1996, p. 250). Notwithstanding the creation of Advanced Placement in the 1950s to support the “ablest” students, people were still arguing, “intellectually advanced students are being deprived of opportunities to develop their potential” (Benbow & Stanley, 1996, p. 252).

The prescribed course of study in *A Nation at Risk* quickly became adopted across states as the graduation requirements for all students to achieve (Berliner & Biddle, 1996). The report recommended “(a) 4 years of English; (b) 3 years of mathematics; (c) 3 years of science; (d) 3 years of social studies; and (e) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, 2 years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended in addition to those taken earlier” [emphasis in original] (Gardner, 1983, p. 24). Yet again, politicians came to a conclusion about what schooling should be provided in order for students to be the most educated they could be. The Carnegie unit may have begun the trend in 1909, but 72 years later

political stakeholders were still trying to impact what they believed American schoolchildren needed to know to be a well-educated populace.

Not only did *Nation at Risk* enable politicians to continue furthering their own agendas about school funding, it also created an environment in which testing companies and non-profit foundations were able to make deals with politicians. For example, in the deficit model of education, more tests became mandated in order to prove learning was happening in schools. Such tests are used by administrators and politicians to prove or disprove students' educational ability. In fact, one measure cited by the report support the claim that students weren't prepared was that "College Board achievement tests also reveal consistent declines in recent years..." (Gardner, 1983, p. 9). Putting aside the fact that declines were likely to happen as higher numbers of students outside the original audience of wealthy, white, males took such tests (see the next section for an explanation of this), it demonstrates the importance for-profit companies had in the race to "educate" students.

This historical push for accelerated learning, regardless of how founded the arguments may be, is critical in understanding the societal influences that were present in making decisions to create programs or change requirements. These societal and political influences are still present today, and from a postmodern perspective, understanding the historical background of the accelerated learning programs may help better understand the impact of such influences, as well as deconstruct them critically.

Advanced Placement and Concurrent Enrollment: What Are They?

In general, both Advanced Placement (AP) and Early College High Schools have the same premise: help accelerate students through college. However, they accomplish this differently. AP courses are high school classes that earn credits for students towards their high

school graduation. At the end of each AP course, students can sign up to take an end-of-course exam that, if passed, may allow them to skip certain courses college, or receive credit for courses they didn't take. Scored on a 1-5 scale, passing is considered to be a score of 3, but many colleges, especially those that have rigorous acceptance policies, may require a score of 4 or 5 to be considered passing. Therefore, it is up to the college/university to determine how much, if any, a passing score will help individual students. This lack of consistency can be contentious (Lichten, 2000) for academic stakeholders who are working within the inconsistencies, but it remains the practice.

Concurrent enrollment programs exist when students are enrolled in two schools simultaneously – usually a high school and a two- or four-year college. Students take high school courses and college courses simultaneously and graduate with credits at both schools. If the student then goes on to a four-year university program, they have already completed part of their course of study, assuming the university or college accepts the units they completed in their high school program. Discussed in more detail later, the first school created that encouraged all of their high school students to take community college credits simultaneously was the Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College in New York, and the first school to offer Bachelor's degrees to students who had not already completed their schooling through twelve was the Bard College at Simon's Creek College in Massachusetts. These have both been called Early and Middle College High Schools.

While concurrent enrollment programs are on the rise, there are other versions of acceleration in high school as well – gifted programs, specialty college enrollment, International Baccalaureate, early graduation – but this study will focus on Advanced Placement and concurrent enrollment. While students can be enrolled in college courses on their own during

high school, this study focused on organized concurrent enrollment programs as those numbers are easier to track. Concurrent enrollment numbers as of the 2009-2010 school year were at over 1.2 million students (Marken, Gray & Lewis, 2013), whereas in 2002-2003, that number was under 700,000 (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). AP and concurrent enrollment programs are across many high schools in the US and impact a significant number of students; they are considered for the sake of this study to be a mainstream secondary acceleration structure. In fact, “during the 2012-2013 school year approximately 132,500 teachers taught AP classes in nearly 14,000 public high schools.” (College Board, 2014). In 1955, AP was at 104 schools nationwide. In the 2014-15 school year, AP was in 21,549 schools (College Board, 2014); this increasing number of students enrolled in courses means AP is in slightly under half of the more than 35,000 public and private high schools in the United States (US Dept. of Education, 2014).

Though it is highly likely that some of these student counts will overlap, the numbers are staggering. Millions of American students are taking one of these forms of college advancement courses before their high school graduation. Therefore, making the choice to choose participants from these two groups will be selecting from a majority group of accelerated programming. To better understand these programs, a history and explanation of each follows.

Advanced Placement

The Advanced Placement (AP) program was created after the findings of a report sponsored by the Ford Foundation’s Fund for the Advancement in Education (FAE) were released. The 1952 report was developed in response to a survey administered to graduates from elite, private boys’ schools who later attended Yale, Harvard, and Princeton universities. The survey, administered by the faculty of the elite boys’ schools, found that graduates were feeling so prepared for college that they were bored, thus spending time recreationally rather than on

academics (Rothschild, 1999). Led by Alan R. Blackmer, English teacher from Andover, and sponsored by the FAE, the group concluded in its report that there should be a way to prepare the boys for more academic rigor (Rothschild, 1999). However, they had a very specific student in mind when creating their program, and though they “tried to outline a program of study which would offer all students of college caliber a better education, *we have been particularly concerned about the superior student*” [emphasis in original] (Taylor, 1952, p. 10).

The remainder of the report discusses how to best create a curriculum for those "superior students" starting in high school and continuing through four years of college. The basic suggestions for education were that schools should not require students to double up or overlap courses, there should be a consistent general format of education core courses, and there should be Advanced Placement examinations (Taylor, 1952). The report also “rests on the faith that the better student is worth more thought than we are giving him, and that better planning for his transition from secondary school to college will gain him a significantly better education,” but, “some things are more important for the ablest minds to know than others,” (Taylor, 1952, p. 122). This seemingly conflicted conclusion – one the one hand, all smart students should have a better experience, on the other, the ablest matter more – is mirrored in the current incarnation of The College Board’s AP program. The mission statement of the entire College Board is to:

Enable students to pursue college-level studies while still in high school. Through more than 30 courses, each culminating in a rigorous exam, AP provides willing and academically prepared students with the opportunity to earn college credit and/or advanced placement. Taking AP courses also demonstrates to college admission officers that students have sought out the most rigorous course work available to them. (College Board, 2014, p. 5)

On the surface, this mission statement looks to help any students who wish to achieve academically; below the surface, it reinforces the notion that those who are competitively working to get into college are more deserving. The focus on finding the students who are most

able to demonstrate college-level skills has been ingrained in the program since the inception, but because the “College Board began the Advanced Placement (AP) program, to challenge a small, elite group of able students” (Lichten, 2000, p. 1) it is in line with the original belief that acceleration should be done for gifted and advanced students.

The end of course exams, created per the fellows at Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, are still being used to determine whether students can "demonstrate their mastery of college-level course work" (College Board, 2014, p. 5). These exams were originally administered by the testing powerhouse, Educational Testing Services (ETS), and continue to be served by them today.

Concurrent High School and College Enrollment

Concurrent enrollment programs have existed in many forms over time, and the number of students participating in them has increased (Andrews, 2004). The most notable program to elevate concurrent enrollment is Middle College High School in New York, founded in 1973 (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Affiliated with the LaGuardia Community College, Middle College was designed to “To decrease the high school dropout rate and increase the college-going and completion rate” (Middle College High School Consortium, 2017). The program was “not primarily designed for acceleration,” however, it was “to open the plan of education in content and format” to more students (Middle College Proposal, 1973, p.16). Replicas began to open in 1986, and by the year 2000, 30 replications were open in the United States (Weschler, 2001). Today, the number of Middle Colleges affiliated with the Middle College High School Consortium is approximately 40 (Middle College High School Consortium, 2017), and in 2002 “Dual Enrollment” became an officially tracked category by the Department of Education (NCES, 2002). Often students are taking a class at their local community college,

many times as a senior who has completed all of the secondary requirements for a high school diploma.

When the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, along with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in conjunction with the Jobs for the Future program, funded the start-up costs of over 20 Early College High Schools in their 2002 Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI), the awareness of such programs rose. Early College High Schools are designed for students to be concurrently enrolled in college and high school courses. Usually, the college coursework is through a local community college. They target students who have not had access to the academic preparation needed to meet college readiness standards, students for whom the cost of college is prohibitive, students of color, and English language learners (Webb & Mayka, 2011). In other words, the initial goal was to “help young people perceived as unlikely to attend or succeed in college” (Webb & Mayka, 2011, p. 1).

The original Early College Initiative of 2002 is based on a single school: Bard High School Early College (BHSEC). Based on the boarding program of Bard College at Simon’s Rock College for academically gifted adolescents, BHSEC was a non-boarding option for students who still wanted to progress through high school faster than the traditional four years. Simon’s Rock College is a liberal arts and sciences college in Massachusetts. Bard College, designed specifically for high school students to begin college after grade ten or eleven, “has shown that for many adolescents, especially those who find the typical high school experience to be boring, unchallenging, and entirely too lengthy, a well-executed early college program can be an essential link to their continuing higher education” (Botstein, 2003, p. 1). Because of that, in 2001, BHSEC was launched in connection with New York City Schools.

How students become concurrently enrolled – individually, through an Early or Middle College, or special agreement with a community college on their traditional campus – can be very diverse. While limiting participants to those who have participated in Advanced Placement or an Early/Middle College High School environment may seem an arbitrary choice in this study, they are national trends in acceleration choices for secondary students; they are also a more structured way to identify potential participants with similar backgrounds. In this study, the main participant attended an Early College High School, taking both AP and college courses.

There are very few differences between an Early College and Middle College. The main difference is structural: students in an Early College take significantly more college courses at younger ages, ideally earning their associate degree at the end of their time in high school (grade 12), while Middle College students take some college courses but are not moving as quickly through their college coursework. Following the recommendations of the Carnegie Commission's 1973 proposal to eliminate duplication and discontinuity by shortening the time for a bachelor's degree, the original Middle College did not begin until grade ten, and students were not taking college courses until grade eleven. In line with the proposals of Koos (1946), the Presidential Commission on Higher Education (Zook, 1947), and recommendations from the Ford Foundation, the program was designed for grades 11-14 (or, the last two years of high school and the first two years of college). Another key difference was Middle College's initial focus on cooperative learning and career education.

Each type of school targets the same demographic and has the same mission of helping underserved populations (Middle College High School Consortium, 2017; Webb & Mayka, 2011). The main difference is where the money came from.

In 1973, Middle College High School in New York began with funding from the Carnegie and Ford Foundations (Weschler, 2001), with support from LaGuardia Community College. In 2002 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation encouraged the development of multiple early colleges by pledging \$40 million in support to open 73 schools like Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) throughout the country (Botstein, 2003). Considered to be successful enough in its first one to two years, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation honored the program by providing financial support, as well as encouraging replica schools all over the United States. They were supported by the Carnegie Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Why Accelerate?

There are key reasons for accelerating at the secondary level, all of which require inspection. One reason is to combat boredom of students who are not challenged in their studies or are “blowing off” their final year in high school (Andrews, 2004; Rothschild, 1999); the second is to help students from underrepresented groups needing additional support to obtain postsecondary education (Middle College High School Consortium, 2017; Webb & Mayka, 2011). A third reason one might assume acceleration programs have seen a boost in enrollment is economic. The first two reasons seem determined by educators and administrators for students, rather than by students for themselves. The last seems one that students and their families may value, however, none of these reasons seem predominately driven by student choice. This may have an influence on how students feel about their participation in such programs and is something that this study will investigate in interviews; how participants feel about why they are involved in accelerated programming may have an impact on their perceived value of such a program.

Acceleration is widely used to combat boredom/challenge students more in the classroom (Lubinski, 2004; Southern & Jones, 2004). Often gifted or talented students are being targeted with accelerated programs for this reason, but it can also include highly motivated students as well (Southern & Jones, 2004). Most studies find that students who participate in Early or Middle College High Schools are generally satisfied with their experiences (Cravey, 2013; Ongaga, 2010; Noble et al, 1998), and that acceleration, in general, can be viewed as having a positive impact on students, particularly those that are considered higher performing (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004; Khazem & Khazem, 2014; Levin, 1989).

As to the second reason, in 2002 of the “estimated 2,050 institutions with dual enrollment programs, approximately 110 (five percent) had dual enrollment programs specifically geared toward high school students at risk of education failure” (NCES, 2011). In 2010, this number was at four percent of the responding institutions, or approximately 60 schools (NCES, 2011). Despite the growing number of options high school students may have had access to that supported college completion, one-third of high school students were not attending college, and a further one-third of those students were not ready for college-level coursework (NCES, 2003-2004). It was due to this type of discrepancy that Early and Middle Colleges became more prevalent; access to college credits while in high school is critical for college completion (Adelman, 2006), and students were either not able, not motivated, or not encouraged to complete the coursework that would have helped them with their educational aspirations after high school. For example, the National Center of Education Statistics estimated that nearly one million students took a college course during the 2002–03 school year (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005) and that about 71% of all public high schools offer concurrent enrollment programs (Waits, Setzer, & Lewis, 2005). Educational attainment is still significantly lower in historically

marginalized groups, which is commonly cited as a reason to support both the Early College High School Initiative and the Middle College movements (Middle College Consortium, 2017; Webb & Mayka, 2011). In 2013, 90% of Black students were graduating from high school, compared to 94% of their White peers (NCES, 2013). However, only 20% of black students were graduating from a 4-year university with a bachelor's degree or higher that year, compared to 40% of their White peers (NCES, 2013). Taking into account socioeconomic status, those numbers are even more dramatically different. Of the students in the lowest socioeconomic status, only 15% obtain a bachelor's degree or higher, while 64% of those with high socioeconomic status do (Bozick, Lauff, & Wirt, 2007).

Students who complete six college credits during high school are more likely to attain a postsecondary degree. Students who complete nine credits are even more likely, and students who complete 12 or more units can nearly ensure that they have the momentum needed to complete college (Adelman, 2006).

Table 1
High School and College Graduation Statistics

	High School Graduation		Obtain Bachelor's Degree (or higher)	
2007 Bozick, Lauff, & Wirt, 2007			Low SES 15%	High SES 64%
2013 National Center for Education Statistics, 2013	Black Students 90%	White Students 94%	Black Students 20%	White Students 40%

While the AP program does not specifically target underserved populations, the College Board does track data about students based on ethnicity. In looking at groups the College Board considers to have equity gaps, between 2003 to 2013: Black/African American student passing

rates have increased by two percent, Hispanic/Latino student passing rates have increased two percent, and American Indian/Alaska Native student passing rates have stayed under one percent each year with little change (College Board, 2013). These contradictions in college degree attainment and accessibility are, in many ways, an accepted – if not understood or condoned – part of regularly reported educational statistics. On the surface, accelerated learning programs attempt to change these contradictions.

Tracked growth in student success in both programs (regardless of amount) indicates increased influence of such programs on the educational landscape, and determining their societal influence is something educational stakeholders should have an understanding of as more and more students participate.

A third reason stems from economics. College costs continue to rise, almost prohibitively, and a 2002 Census Bureau found that workers with college diplomas will earn over \$1 million more in their lifetimes than those who do not (Cheeseman & Newburger, 2002). Considering the cost of living and inflation, “Over a lifetime, individuals with a bachelor’s degree make 84% more than those with only a high school diploma” (Carnevale, Rose & Cheah, 2011, p. 1). For these reasons, families may be looking for more affordable ways to send their children to college. Early Colleges typically offer college tuition and books to students for free (Webb & Mayka, 2011). As we look at national trends, we see that in 2010 only 56% of postsecondary institutions with concurrent enrollment programs offered a discounted rate of tuition, with 45% saying that parents and students paid for the tuition expenses out of pocket (NCES, 2011). Advanced Placement coursework may allow students to bypass certain required courses in college, though it’s difficult to track how that would have impacted students financially.

After reading the above pages, it should be apparent that the following ideas transcend historical era and apply to both the past and present of accelerated education:

1. The influence of educational stakeholders, politicians, and philanthropists on the landscape of American schooling is deeply rooted and widespread. Over time, educational influencers used their positions to further their personal agendas about education. All of the educational movements discussed in the previous pages of this chapter were first implemented by private foundations, educational leaders at elite institutions, or politicians (Gardner, 1983; Rothschild, 1999; University of California, 1908; Zook, 1947).
2. The decision to accelerate is often based on what is happening in society. The age of apprenticeship, World War II, the Cold War, international competition, the national economy and the increasing costs of college education...all influenced the choices of politicians or educational stakeholders to encourage students to progress through schooling faster than what was the current norm (Flemming, 1960; National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983; Pressey, 1949; Rothschild, 1999; University of California, 1908; Webb & Mayka, 2011; Zook 1947). These are not only societal influences, but highly political. The connection between what happens in our schools and decisions that are made to benefit society or individual corporations cannot be ignored. While I would like to believe in the altruism of for-profit companies and elected officials, the information above seems seeded in self-interest.
3. Educators or politicians concluded that kids were bored or not being challenged in school, so rather than changing the curriculum and content being taught, they created paths that encouraged faster completion as a way to combat this (Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Jolly, 1990; Lubinski, 2004; Taylor et al, 1952). This is an assumption that, while may or may not be accurate, puts the onus of change on the students, rather than solving the root of the problem.

What Are the Results of Acceleration?

With accelerated programs becoming more prevalent in the last twenty years, there has been an increase in studies about how students in such programs are impacted by participating. Most look at measurable numbers of students graduating and continuing on to college (Speroni, 2011a), or at how they compare to their non-accelerated counterparts (Berger et al, 2010) in terms of attendance, graduation rates, and matriculation. Some blend student perceptions and school culture with other measurable topics like attendance and grades (Bernstein et al., 2010). However, despite the fact that the conversation around this topic has been taking place since the

1800s and that there is an increase in schools catering to accelerated student programs (Bozick, Lauff, & Wirt, 2007), there are still no conclusions as to whether they are beneficial to students after college. Some follow-up studies have been done but are typically quantitative and focused on generalizing about a program or course of study (Flesher & Pressey, 1955; Pressey, 1967). More importantly, most conclusions that have been made are done through positivist, post-positivist, or constructivist lenses.

Researchers agree that these programs support students strongly in terms of school culture in high school (Born, 2006; Combs, 2016; Cravey, 2013; Edmunds et al., 2013; Speroni, 2011b). They also support students academically in preparation for college (Knudsen & Hoshen, 2014; Cravey, 2013; Godfrey et al., 2014; Haxton et al., 2016). Some research shows that students may have a difficult time adjusting to the difficulty of the coursework (MacDonald & Farrell, 2012; Ongaga, 2010; Woodcock & Beal, 2013), but most student-focused research data is limited to external influences and perceptions, rather than their own efficacy (Calhoun, Rangel & Coulson, 2017).

One quantitative study by Taylor (2015) found that “dual credit policies positively affect all students, but smaller effect sizes were detected for low-income students and students of color compared with average estimates suggesting that existing dual credit policies are inequitable” (p. 355). This is one of the only publications questioning the lack of equity students of color may be experiencing, despite them currently being touted as the intended demographic.

Another main concern about concurrent enrollment programs are the inability of students to always transfer every college credit they take once they arrive at their college or university of choice, though there is very little data collected on the topic, one estimate is that students lose 13% of the credits they earn upon transferring (Gewertz, 2016).

Though acceleration is not a new concept, new research is difficult to find. Much of the published research concerning early colleges and concurrent enrollment programs has remained relatively unchanged between 2006 and the present. However, as early colleges and concurrent enrollment programs become more prevalent within different states, there are more unpublished doctoral and master's students taking a look at the possible ramifications of such education. Looking at unpublished studies, it is clear that many education students are investigating student evaluations of their early college experience (Guilbault, 2013; Reed, 2017), analysis of the retention rates of first-year post-secondary students (Prophete, 2013), and perceptions of their college readiness and transition to college (Heath, 2008; Williams, 2014). The fact that more doctoral and master's theses are being written regarding these topics makes it clear that this area in educational research is necessary.

Postmodernism: Definitions and Applications

Before explaining the version of postmodernism that is used in the remainder of this study, a note to those readers who are highly educated about postmodernist philosophy and may be concerned about the lack of explanation related to poststructuralism: yes, there is a strong overlap between postmodernism and poststructuralism (Rosenau, 1992). However, “because they are considered synonymous,” and “few efforts have been made to distinguish between the two because the differences appear to be of little consequence” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 3), please read the following pages with the understanding that poststructuralism is a related piece of postmodernism (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017), and the main difference – if looking for one – is the emphasis on cultural critique in postmodernism and the emphasis on deconstruction and language in poststructuralism (Rosenau, 1992). However, these differences are so nuanced that

they are beyond the scope of understanding that is necessary for this study. Seminal texts by thinkers like Derrida (1967/1997), Foucault (1971/2010), and Lyotard (1979) have been referenced in this review of literature, though current texts discussing postmodernism from a wider viewpoint were relied upon more heavily.

Stemming from a rejection of modernity, the idea of postmodernism began in the 1960s “as an umbrella term for a group of American literary scholars, whence it slowly spread within their discipline and to other fields in the arts and humanities” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 255). When researchers create their own story using the stories of others, this is called a metanarrative. The penchant of many researchers towards metanarratives is dangerous and risky (Lather, 1991; Lyotard, 1979; Slattery, 2000) and postmodern researchers must avoid writing in a way that makes the story theirs. Whereas modernism “promises freedom, equality, justice, the good life, and prosperity” (Bloland, 2005, p. 523), postmodernism questions Grand Narratives that are presented through historical texts and commonly held societal beliefs (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Bloland, 2005; Lyotard, 1979; Rosenau, 1992). Thus, the modern ideals being challenged were and are “all-encompassing world views” to “[reduce] Marxism, Christianity, Fascism, Stalinism, capitalism, liberal democracy, secular humanism, feminism, Islam, and modern science to the same order and [dismiss] them all as logocentric, transcendental totalizing metanarratives that anticipate all questions and provide predetermined answers” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 6). Because of all of these reasons, postmodern theories vary widely and it is difficult to find consensus on a written definition, as most researchers holding postmodern positions are unlikely to conform to a single meaning, nor will they be likely to label themselves as such (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bloland, 2005; Lather, 1991; Rosenau, 1992; Slattery, 2000). Review the following definitions, for example:

“Postmodern theory is an attempt to expose contradictions and prejudices that are present in every written text and human interaction” (Slattery, 2000, p. 134).

“Postmodernism is positioned within the loss of a confident and secure national mood brought on by deflation of Enlightenment beliefs under the cumulative pressure of historical events such as the atomic bomb, the Holocaust, and the war in Vietnam” (Lather, 1991, p. 31).

“Postmodernism represents a form of cultural criticism that radically questions the logic of foundations that has become the epistemological cornerstone of modernism” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 62).

And finally, postmodernism is “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1979, p. xxiv).

As we can see at first glance above, the similarity in these definitions is their lack of similarity. There are no keywords or phrases for researchers to find in discussions of postmodernism; each author interprets it in their own way. The question is not what postmodernism is, as there is no “right” way; the question is how it is being used in this study. Upon closer look, however, what is similar about these definitions is that they all seek to challenge current status quos through elements of questioning, criticism, and skepticism. They can all be viewed from moderate or extremist positions. Also in common is the sense that if society were to be viewed through this lens of by all, it might ideally create better living conditions for all.

While all postmodernists have a certain cynicism, to further break down postmodern ideals, it is important to understand that there are two types of postmodernists: affirmative and skeptical (Figure 3).

Compiled in entirety from P.M. Rosenau, 1992.	
Affirmative Postmodernist Beliefs	Skeptical Postmodernist Beliefs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Postmodern age is uncertain 2. Postmodern age is hopeful 3. Truth is not arbitrary, but it is relative 4. There is no truth that is not personal, and community based 5. Theory is unsystematic, decentered, heterological, and from non-privileged voices 6. Need to change repressive qualities like time, space, and history 7. Open to positive political action 8. Do not shy away from making normative choices and give certain value choices more importance than others 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Postmodern age is uncertain 2. Postmodern age is fragmented, disintegrated, meaningless, chaotic 3. Reality is an illusion 4. There is no truth 5. Language turns truth and theory into linguistic conventions; there is no way to say anything with confidence 6. No social or political project is worthy of commitment, because political views are constructions 7. Non-participation is the most revolutionary position to take 8. Prefer relativism and uncertainty and doubt the value of reason

Figure 3. Differences between affirmative and skeptical postmodernists.

While further discussed in the Researcher Positionality section of Chapter Three of this paper, the author writes from a more affirmative perspective. The overarching difference between a postmodern study and a similar study that uses quantitative or more traditional interpretations of the data may be that non-postmodern studies tend to focus on a single interpretation or meaning of the material, and in fact may be looking for an answer to a problem, suggest alternatives, or make recommendations. In fact, postmodernism understands that “Data might be better conceived as material for telling a story where the challenge becomes to generate a polyvalent database that is used to vivify interpretation as opposed to “support” or “prove” (Lather, 1991, p. 91). Additionally, judgment and advocacy are not used to discuss postmodern research (Rosenau, 1992), as that is not the end-goal of such researchers.

Postmodernism in Education

Typically, within education, modernism reigns. Schooling, especially higher education, “is so deeply immersed in modernist sensibilities and so dependent upon modernist foundations that erosion of our faith in the modernist project calls into question higher education's legitimacy, its purpose, its activities, its very *raison d'être*” (Bloland, 2005, p. 522). Such a calling into question is the task of postmodernists, and to apply such a philosophy to an educational study allows for “radical questioning” and “cultural criticism” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 62) of postmodern deconstruction. Per Bloland (2005), some of the assumptions and values that have been ingrained within higher education for hundreds of years are:

1. Merit should be rewarded.
2. Institutional autonomy is important.
3. Middle-class values are good for society and individuals.
4. Linear progress is possible.
5. Science and the scientific method are ways to create truth.
6. Obtaining an education will prevent downward social mobility.

Ingrained though they are in educational institutions, so too have these ideals become ingrained into the very social fabric of many cultures.

There are clear, common, factors to understanding postmodernism in higher education, and they can all be applied more specifically to accelerated learning. For instance, using Lather's (1991) definition above, we see that postmodern ideals stem from the notion that there has been a downturn in the national mood because of the impact of important historical events like the Vietnam War. In terms of secondary education, we read above that acceleration's main push has always been in the face of a major national event, such as Sputnik or the Korean War.

This connection between encouraging acceleration and postmodernism as a result of a national mood may make clear that acceleration, in itself, is a postmodern concept.

Further, taking the above definition of Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) supports the need for this study, as well as any studies about education that are written from this philosophy. Does not concern with the premise of credit-based transition programs demonstrate radical questioning? Putting aside the financial and political interference that set up the systems in the first place, programs that encourage students to step out of the four-year norm, question their own beliefs about how long high school and college need to take and create a system that is outside of the current foundation of secondary education all demonstrate the concept of “radical questioning.” However, when we put the financial and political interference back into the equation, it calls in to question Lyotard's (1979) notion that modernist “decision-makers...allocate our lives for the growth of power...The legitimation of that power is based on its optimizing the system's performance – efficiency” (p. xxiv). We are left with uncertainty if Early College High Schools and other concurrent enrollment programs are prime examples of postmodern institutions, or simply more modernism repackaged to be palatable to postmodern-leaning modernists.

There are several generalized ways in which to apply postmodernism to this study. However, in addition to discovering the idea of whether all concurrent enrollment options are postmodern institutions providing value to their attendees, in this interpretive biography the two-part focus will be on the language of storytelling and a postmodern view of time.

Postmodernism and Storytelling

While the application of interpretive biography to this study will be further discussed in chapter three, it is important to understand the philosophical underpinnings that support this choice of storytelling and explain how postmodernists view language.

Language within postmodern research is more likely to describe investigations and concerns and assumes there will be multiple interpretations and variations based on the reader (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Bloland, 2005; Rosenau, 1992). Jacques Derrida's (1967/1997) post-structuralist writings emphasize that no texts are stable, nor do they present absolute truth. The notion that readers bring their backgrounds and beliefs into what they read is a main idea present in all of his work, however, as poststructuralist beliefs are usually in line with skeptical postmodernists (Rosenau, 1992), Derrida's work values every deconstruction of a single text as equal and believes the text is singularly important. While there is more that can be unpacked in Derrida's works (he is the father of deconstruction, after all), this concept about textual meanings is similar to the overarching understanding of language and texts used within this study.

Critically important to telling another person's life experiences is the understanding that "no reading or writing of a life is ever complete or final," as well as that "readers create texts, for meaning is not just in a text or in a word; it arises out of the interactions between texts, writers, and readers" (Denzin, 1989, p. 47). Readers read for enjoyment, and "are able to create an infinite number of interpretations...because [each text] is rewritten with every encounter" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 35). Thus, a biographer should use language to tell the story of another that is cautious, using de-centering processes. This attempts to ensure that there is no importance given to a life that it does not have, all the while understanding that readers will assign importance to anything labeled a biography and, as such, will still shape reader interactions with

the text (Denzin, 1989). For these reasons, the original research in this study is presented as a version of an interpretive biography, a style that is defined as “Creating literary, narrative, accounts, and representations of lived experiences. Telling and inscribing stories” (Denzin, 1989, p. 11).

Furthermore, interpretive biographies, based as they are on transcriptions of interviews and then ordered and presented through the researcher’s understanding, remove the element of lived experiences from the participant’s story. This language that is somewhat frozen in time usually means the biography is told in a chronological or linear order (Denzin, 1989). This study, and others like it, attempt to present a lived experience to the best of its ability, but this postmodern understanding of interpretive biography makes it clear that the participant’s experiences will remain objectified.

This is not to say that stories cannot be told, or that biographies and autobiographies are useless or otherwise irrelevant. It is to say that all biographies, including this one, should be careful. In this study, care was taken to present information using language that was not the researcher’s, but the participant’s. Using the structure of presenting the story in a way that wove “the subject’s life into and through the researcher’s interpretations of that life,” also known as “making sense of an individual’s life” (Denzin, 1989, p. 58), this study was able to show a life experience from the researcher’s perspective, but the individual participant also made meaning of her own life through the research process. Because the participant’s awareness of their own experiences changes when processing them through discussion or writing, their story remains constantly in production. As Denzin (1989) describes it, this process creates a “temporal production” for the participant, in which he “attempt[s] to capture his deep, inner, inward self, understanding that he is more than his words make him out to be” (p. 63).

Postmodernism and the Relevance of Time

In relation to postmodernism, the notion of acceleration becomes completely unnecessary. For, if we believe that, “learning is timeless; temporality is the process of becoming and not the act of arriving” (Slattery, 1995, p. 628), then there is no need to accelerate; all students are learning what they are learning at the rate that is perfect for them. However, in education, it is common knowledge that time constraints – hours in a school day, days in a school year, how many vacations, how many minutes in a class period, periods between bells ringing – are consistently under discussion and of concern. It began in the late 1800s with the Committee of Ten determining curriculum for high school and continued on nearly 100 years later in the 1994 report, *Prisoners of Time* (Kane) and included eight recommendations. They were to:

1. Reinvent schools around learning, not time.
 2. Fix the design flaw. Use time in new and different ways.
 3. Establish an academic day.
 4. Keep schools open longer to meet the needs of children and communities.
 5. Give teachers the time they need.
 6. Invest in technology.
 7. Develop local action plans to transform schools.
 8. Share the responsibility. Finger-pointing and evasion must end.
- (Kane, 1994, p. 7)

Superficially, these recommendations seemed vague enough to please both postmodernists and traditionalists alike. However, as “the modernist solution to the dilemma of teaching in a milieu with pervasive time constraints is to develop the technology and organizational structures that will reallocate time more efficiently” (Slattery, 1995, p. 614), these recommendations begin to look more like an organizational structure reinforcing the notion that acceleration is an unnecessary action if schools are successfully attending to the needs of student learning. More to the point, “to reverse the limitation of fixed time, *Prisoners of Time* envisions

a fixed curriculum where time becomes the flexible variable” (Slattery, 1995, p. 613). This is a postmodern impossibility, as a fixed curriculum itself is at odds with postmodern philosophy but reinforces the traditional power structures within the educational system. If we believe as Lyotard (1979) does, then we agree that efficiency is the true end-goal of those in power, as it allows their power to be more legitimized. Therefore, if efficiency is the true end-goal of educational reform, such reform is in direct opposition to postmodern philosophy, as well as working to keep the status quo. In addition, such reform reinforces the notion that schooling and education are one and the same, but it is clear that one can be highly educated without ever attending school, and one can be highly schooled while appearing uneducated.

As we take in all that postmodernism can teach us, it becomes important to review through the previous pages with these lessons at the forefront of our thinking. This chapter’s sections discussed history, program development, and reasoning for accelerating students through school. When reviewing the literature about these topics through postmodernism, we must remember that all writing is the author's truth and that any interpretation is the reader’s truth. This postmodern literature review, then, recognizes the “elusive nature of language, but never with the aim of creating a meta-discourse to explain all language forms,” and stays away from “trying to explain formal structuring, for this is impossible” (Hassard, 1994, p. 305). Thus, each individual can understand the formal structures of Advanced Placement, concurrent enrollment, and accelerated learning, but it is unlikely that any two people will view the information the same. (The notion of language and storytelling as discussed above also applies here.)

Understanding the postmodern ideals that I am using to review the literature, and later, will use to collect data, interpret data, and present findings, is an important piece of

understanding this study. My use of postmodern understanding in the Findings chapter of this study will include a discussion of a participant's responses and researcher interpretation, while not attempting to create a universal understanding of acceleration, as well as giving voice to the participants, rather than my own voice about the participants or an attempt to universalize their experiences.

Mind the Gap

It appears that there should be no contest as to whether accelerated programs should be supported; the current literature presents no real perceived negatives, but many reasons for support. Under the auspices of college degree attainment, grade point averages, college attendance, and high school culture, such programs appear to be what society has deemed a successful educational program. As we dig a little deeper, however, it becomes clear that there is not enough research to understand the possible implications for graduates. These implications go beyond the knowledge gained and a college degree; we must also look at the cultural implications. If, as Aronowitz & Giroux (1991) said above, postmodernism requires us to “radically question the logic of foundations” (p. 62), then we have a responsibility to look at the logic of asking students to participate in such programs and the foundation of secondary and post-secondary expectations in general. We also have a responsibility to ask where the information that is in support of concurrent enrollment and AP programs are coming from. Much of the statistical data presented in the literature is funded and commissioned by, or from within, the organizations being analyzed and focus on numbers rather than people.

Besides, it is necessary to look at the results of current research in an attempt to understand the “contradictions and prejudices that are present in every written text and human interaction” (Slattery, 2000, p. 134). To do this we need to question deeper accelerated learning

research that uses language like “high-ability learners” (Dare & Nowicki, 2015) and “advantage-yielding” (Pressey, 1962). We need to question descriptors like “college-ready” (Edmunds, 2012) to describe high school students, and findings of Early Colleges as “effective” (American Institutes of Research and SRI International, 2009) or “obtaining strong results” (Edmunds et al, 2013, p. 2). These terms are oft-found within this body of research and are examples of the judgmental language about college preparatory programs...though the judges’ language seems supportive. To be increasingly critical about these metanarratives created through researcher bias or contradictions is in line with a postmodern interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989; Lyotard, 1979).

The lack of research done with acceleration beyond both secondary and post-secondary schooling, the lack of student voice about their long-term experience, and this interpretation of postmodernism has informed this study’s approach and methods. Blending what has already been done with new research, then looking through a new lens will allow this study to encourage future conversations between stakeholders about how acceleration may impact students – and society – much longer than in their individual experiences in high school and transition to college.

Chapter Summary

This chapter consists of three parts: the historical context for secondary schooling, the historical context for educational acceleration and concurrent enrollment, and an explanation of postmodernist philosophy as it relates to education. The literature shows a variety of historical and political justifications for accelerating students through schooling. Postmodernism encourages unpacking the prejudices and contradictions of society, while also questioning the logic of what is accepted as foundational beliefs. With that in mind, this study seeks to better

inform the understanding the Academy has regarding participant responses to their accelerated learning experience by looking through a lens of cultural criticism. This understanding will encourage a more widespread discussion of the possible impact these options have on humans and society in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The previous two chapters define and describe accelerated learning in the United States. As discussed, accelerated learning is defined as “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than typical” (Pressey, 1949, p. 2). While there is an abundance of information about accelerated learning historically and statistically, as well as specific program evaluation, research that reflects on the overall impact of these accelerated programs on college graduates is still emerging.

The following chapter begins with an explanation of an interpretive biography methodology and justification for this approach. It then turns to the context, design, and participants. The final section discusses my analysis of the empirical materials and steps taken to establish trustworthiness.

Review of Research Questions

Overarching question: What are college graduates' perceptions and understandings of their experiences in secondary accelerated programs?

Subquestions: In what ways do college graduates perceive value from their experiences in secondary accelerated learning programs? In what ways does participation in a secondary accelerated learning program impact the college experiences of college graduates?

Methodology, Approach, and Design

While there are qualitative studies highlighting the nature of student experiences within a specific accelerated program (e.g. Born, 2006; Morgan, 2015; Noble et al, 1998; Woodcock & Beal, 2013), and quantitative studies that attempt to quantify the success or failure of such programs or students in such programs (e.g. Allen & Dadger, 2012; Edmunds et al, 2013; Giani,

Alexander & Reyes, 2014; Karp & Hughes, 2008; Martin, 2013), this study sought to understand reflections of college graduates related specifically to the impact participating in an accelerated learning program had on their lives, rather than a program evaluation or statistical comparison of how well the student did or did not do within the program.

The methodology of this study focused on three main concepts: 1) the approach that aligned best philosophically with the researcher and research question; 2) the methods that provided the plan of the study, and 3) the trustworthiness this study achieved. Within this methodology, it is important to note how postmodernism dictated the language and explanations that guide this chapter, as well as the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Per Denzin (2013, 2017), the word data is dead and does not appear in this study. Rather, readers will find instead the use of “empirical materials,” as those who believe that their qualitative research will “only deal with materials that can be drawn from and are based in experience: performances, emotions, perceptions, feelings, actions” (Denzin, 2017, p. 848) typically understand that the term data is positivist in origin, and presumes that something with experimental and positivist language will have inherent value. I have replaced the term because of the understanding that all words and interpretations are inherently political and because “Meanings are always in motion, incomplete, partial contradictory” (Denzin, 2013, p. 354). Therefore it is no longer desirable to use terms that encourage viewing “words (e.g., participants' words in interview transcripts) as brute data waiting to be coded,” that can be easily “labeled with other brute words (and even counted)” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 715). Therefore, the term “coding” will also not appear. Operating under the belief that, “if you think you need to find a theme, you probably will” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 715), while I do present my

interpretations of the findings, I understand that others may well view the information presented differently. We are both correct.

Research Approach

As the research questions focus on the non-quantifiable elements of perception and understanding, the approach to this study was qualitative. As such, this study followed the three tenets of basic qualitative research as set forth by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), as it helps understand 1) how college graduates interpret their experiences, 2) how they reflect on these experiences, and 3) the meaning to which they attribute these experiences. By focusing on the participant's stories about her experiences within the system of accelerated learning, this design provided rich, first-person information that can be used to look beyond the statistics of such educational programs to understand the people behind the numbers (Patton, 2002). This study embraced the canon of naturalistic inquiry set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Isaac and Michael (1995). The approach of naturalistic inquiry “is to investigate human behavior in its natural and unique contexts...by avoiding the artificial constraints of control and manipulation” (Isaac & Michael, 1995, p. 218).

Research Design

This study used the design of interpretive biography to delve into the perceptions of a single main participant who completed a secondary accelerated learning program and went on to graduate from a four-year institution. It also included two participant-identified “relevant adults” as additional sources.

An interpretive biography is the “literary form of qualitative research with strong ties to literature...and it focuses on the microanalytic picture – individual stories – rather than the broader picture of cultural norms” (Creswell, 2015, p. 504). Narratives “[characterize] the

phenomena of human experience and its study, which is appropriate to many social science fields” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), and offer “translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 116), which is similar. However, an interpretive biography may read differently than a narrative. As a biography typically delves into a single life story, by “creat[ing] literary, narrative, accounts and representations of lived experiences” (Denzin, 1989, p. 11), such a text should read like a literary biography of a person. If we, like Denzin (1989), view life as a social text, we understand that a biography can be written, but it is always being interpreted. Therefore, an interpretive biography focuses on “telling and inscribing stories” (Denzin, 1989, p. 11), while seeking to understand how “men and women live and give meaning to their lives and capture these meanings in written, narrative, and oral forms” (Denzin, 1989, p. 10).

Why Interpretive Biography?

There are three reasons why an interpretive biography was an appropriate methodology for this topic. The first reason is that using this design allowed the results to be accessible to non-researchers to allow interested stakeholders a better understanding of the empirical materials as they were collected, before and after analysis. By using a methodology that was not experimental and did not require extensive statistical understanding, this study was discovery-oriented, ensured true, non-experimental, qualitative design, and enabled understanding by laypeople, a hallmark of qualitative design (Lincoln & Guba, 1978; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Focusing on a whole person, rather than on the separation of individuals, interpretive biography is an ongoing, circular process that encourages holistic interpretation (Denzin, 1989). As many educational stakeholders do not have a background in research methodologies, choosing an approach that is easily understood from a holistic perspective was appropriate and necessary.

The second reason this was an appropriate form for this study is the nature of literature already written. As discussed in chapter two, there is still little research that focuses on the post-college reflection of participants in concurrent enrollment programs. The nature of an in-depth, reflective, view of a participant in the concurrent enrollment program after the program's completion is rare, and this format allowed for the participant's views to be acknowledged, honored, and shared, while still questioning societal mores and modern structure of higher education. Rarer still was presenting the information from within an interpretive and postmodern view.

The final reason this was an appropriate approach is because of the use of postmodernism. Encouraging a researcher to be grounded in the notion that there is no such thing as a “True” story, postmodernism encourages uncertainty. This interpretive biography will offer one person's story of accelerated learning, one person's truth, but acknowledges that there is no certainty when presenting the story of the participants, as there are many truths about accelerated learning being experienced every day. Seeking in-depth, single stories allows researchers to better see the landscape of accelerated learning and its impact on people, not to generalize, but to better understand.

The following section includes the participant selection, and the collection, management, analysis and interpretation strategies of empirical materials.

Respondent Selection Strategies

Interpretive biography, as the name implies, is a biographical account. As in literature, an interpretive biography focuses on a single person's lived experiences, using additional information from influential figures in the life of the subject (Denzin, 1989). This does two things: seeks “multiple perspectives on the same life experiences,” and attempts “to extract

multiple meanings from the stories” (Denzin, 1989, p. 57). This method will go beyond a single participant's experience in a school or program and attempt to further understand the impact of acceleration on the participant's life by collecting information from people who have additional information about him/her/them.

The main participant was chosen using purposeful sampling, to select an information-rich case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). Using criterion-based selection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2006), I determined that the following attributes were directly related to the purpose of my study:

1. The participant selected went directly to a four-year university upon high school graduation; and
2. graduated from a four-year university within four years; and
3. graduated from a four-year university not longer than two years before empirical materials collection began; and
4. took at least two of their four high school years in a concurrent enrollment program.
5. entered college with completion credit for at least six college-level courses or the equivalent of one traditional semester.

These criteria allowed me to form an intensity sampling, consisting of “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely (but not extremely)” (Patton, 2002, p. 235). I was not looking for a 13-year-old child prodigy, nor was I seeking a wise 75-year-old who participated in an early iteration of the Advanced Placement program.

Identifying students who fit these criteria was not difficult, given the “insider status” I discussed in Chapter One. As I have a background in teaching at an Early College High School, I asked former students – many of whom are currently in college or already graduated from college - to put me in contact with anyone who went to a school similar to the one they attended. I have strong relationships with many of my former students, and social media makes requests

such as this easy to pass on, I found multiple candidates to narrow down to a single participant. I did select a student I had a previous teacher/student relationship with, though I was not in contact with her prior to my request for help. I discuss this further in the Positionality section of this chapter.

While selecting a participant, I decided that the time spent in the secondary school program didn't matter as much as whether the participant had graduated, but the number of units the student carried from secondary concurrent enrollment program into the university and how long it took him/her to complete a university program. Thus, I changed my participant criteria to reflect that realization. Secondary acceleration, after all, is designed to have students matriculate through post-secondary work faster.

Empirical Materials Collection

The bulk of this study focused on participant interviews and communication. To understand the lived stories of the participant, I collaborated with the main participant and her family as an interconnected storytelling process (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990), but I also viewed the interviews as a conversation, understanding that the interviews' questions and responses were “contextually grounded and jointly constructed by [myself] and respondent” (Mishler, 1986, p. 34). This understanding allowed for interviews with participants that were conversational, open-ended, and analyzed in an ongoing, circular process in an attempt to generalize the sample population. While the topic of the interviews related to the study's research question, they were not be scripted, as to respect the lived experiences of the participant; additionally, the participant/researcher relationship encouraged trust, and reinforced the notion that the retelling process of the story requires collaboration (Connelley & Clandinin,

1990; Mishler, 1986). The prior relationship I had with the participant created a baseline for this respect; the interviews and follow-up allowed it to deepen and continue.

The initial in-person interview did not exceed two hours in time, and additional interviews took the form of email communication. These never exceeded more than two to four questions at any one time and were done at the participant's convenience and with seeming enthusiasm. The research did take longer than the initial three-month timeline that was projected, but the researcher never contacted the participant more than one time per month for twelve months, the last of which was a request to verify accuracy and that the researcher's interpretations of the empirical materials were not unfounded. Emails of clarification were sent, and the participant was able to respond on her own time. All of these are outlined in the informed consent that was signed by the participant. The researcher provided a \$50 gift card after the initial interview and journal questions were completed, with the understanding that the participant could have changed her mind at any time. My goals for the interviews were to obtain the outline of the participant's educational experiences and beliefs, as well as background information on educational relationships she formed throughout school (See Appendix C for interview protocol).

While interviews after an experience has happened are not as naturalistic as using field observation, by going into the interviews without an extensive script of questions to ask or categories to check off there was a lack of control and manipulation of the collection of empirical materials, as encouraged by Isaac and Michael (1995). In addition, not using predetermined categories of questions or topics allowed for the organic, deep, thoughtful nature of qualitative research to be preserved (Patton, 2002). Finally, this approach encouraged the researcher to

make sense of the empirical materials during and after collecting them, rather than forming a theory and seeking to prove/disprove it (Creswell, 2013).

I also conducted interviews of adults relevant in the participant's life for supplemental information. They were the main participant's father and one of her three younger brothers. Each was over the age of 18, deemed important by the participant, and completed an informed consent form (Appendix B). The goals for these interviews was to determine additional details about the participant, find out her family's background and beliefs surrounding education, and to better understand the participant (see Appendix E for interview protocol).

Additionally, field texts that “document the individual's story” (Creswell, 2015, p. 508) were also used. I provided the participant with journal prompts to respond to in writing on her own time (see Appendix D for the text of prompts). These prompts enabled the researcher to read responses that a) are in the participant's own words, b) were answered in the participant's own time, without feeling the rush to respond that may be present in an interview, and c) encouraged more openness and less embarrassment with some responses than a face-to-face interview. I also sent follow up questions via email after time had passed to ask the participant to reflect on her journey since our original interview.

Photographs or other personal documents as deemed important by the participant were also used to aid storytelling but were not required. I was permitted to review the participant's posts on Instagram and Facebook, two social media programs that she used to communicate many feelings about graduation, getting a new job, and tips for others who may have been looking for advice about college or life. These helped form a more full story than depending only on what was presented in interviews and written responses.

I also reviewed major news events that occurred in the participant's community during the time he/she was in high school. This included a review of local newspaper articles. Few major local events took place during the time, but these articles allowed for a profile of the location to be created as an aid in storytelling.

Finally, I used technology to aid in my collection of empirical materials. The ability to send emails was an important way to discuss follow-up questions, clarify responses, and allow for a form of member checking with a faster turnaround time than waiting for the entire analysis to be completed. This served not only as a support to materials collection but will also be discussed in the next section as a form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Due to interviews being the main materials used for analysis, an important addition to the transcriptions were memos about my observations of the participants during the interviews, as well as any notes about field texts. Creswell defines memos as notes the researcher writes “throughout the research process to elaborate on ideas about the coded data and categories,” (2015). These memos may “[capture] your reflections, tentative themes, hunches, ideas and things to pursue,” and notes of what “to ask, observe, or look for in your next round of data collection” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 196). Informal written and spoken memos were taken after all participant interviews and emails received. These memos were kept confidential and only refer to interviewees by their pseudonym if names were used at all. The memo process and voice notes to myself became important as I analyzed the materials, as further described in the next section.

Analysis of Empirical Materials

Management of the empirical materials collected during research is key within any research. Accurately transcribing stories, thus ensuring all direct quotations are accurate and

able to be used to provide the rich narrative detail that is expected within this methodology is critical, as is revisiting the stories with the participants as the transcription and analysis process is occurring.

The participants were given pseudonyms for use throughout the study, and some distinguishing information was removed. The researcher paid an online confidential service to transcribe all of the interviews verbatim. All transcriptions were given line numbers and identified the location and time of each interview. Additionally, all interviews were transcribed and analyzed before follow-up information was requested to allow for simultaneous analysis and material collection.

While writing an interpretive biography is more like writing a fictional narrative than quantitative research, it is still important to have an organized system for managing the transcriptions that were collected.

A more traditional qualitative study may say here that “The transcriptions were analyzed and classified for recurring regularities, deviant cases, and matters of substantive significance” (Patton, 2002), to make it clear that analysis took place with researcher-assigned codes. As with any discovery-oriented naturalistic inquiry, it was impossible to suggest what categories those may be ahead of time (Isaac & Michael, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002), and the themes took shape as interpretation took place.

However, after reading a lot of Denzin (2013) and St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) in addition to Creswell (2015), Patton (2002) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016), I did not understand how to code my empirical materials. It seemed so easy on paper. But after thinking in terms of the political – and to some extent – violent implications that coding other people's words have, I could not bring myself to code in the manner of traditional research. Since “data and evidence

are never morally or ethically neutral” (Denzin, 2013, p. 354), and traditional coding means “one must assume that words textualized in interview transcripts and field notes are not only data but also brute data that can be broken apart and decontextualized by coding,” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 716) I eschewed traditional coding. Instead, I used theory to better understand how to interpret the transcriptions. This led me to treat language as a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) needing to be taken apart, looked at, and put back together through my interpretations. The rhizome theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) looks at language as similar to rhizomes in the plant world. While above ground the plants look individual and separate, underground their roots are interconnected and dependent upon each other. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) built this theory by explaining that all language is based in power, because “there is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity” (p. 7) and that we can “analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers” (p. 8). The language within my materials needed to be reviewed in ways that worked to decenter the dominant language (my researcher bias) to allow the mother tongue (the participant’s story) a voice, rather than taken over.

After collecting, transcribing, and interpreting the interviews, the next step of a strong interpretive biography, much like fiction, or a narrative study, was to create an outline about the plot of the story. Plot outlining requires narrative researchers to choose stories that will best illustrate the participants' experiences (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990). After outlining, typically researchers go through the information and restory it into their own words (Creswell, 2015). This restorying process allows the researcher to organize the information into themes and categories as a way to provide a “causal link among ideas” (Creswell, 2015, p. 511). This is where the rhizomatic interpretation became important.

Similar to narrative inquiry, there is “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds,” any researcher working closely with singular participants and stories “needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard” (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). This will allow the story to have a stronger chronological link between elements and can help show patterns and themes better. More specifically, stories from transcriptions, field texts, and memos will be used to broaden and generalize about the participant's experience, and/or to burrow into the deeper meaning of an event (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990). The restorying process takes place mostly in the writing process, but as stated multiple times above, the research process in interpretive biographies is circular, and the writing/rewriting process often takes place while still collecting stories from participants. Again, within a naturalistic inquiry, it is impossible to know what form the storytelling will take; it may be chronological, flashback, or something completely different. While telling a story can be fun or feel meaningful, there are two concerns within narrative-style research writing. While an obvious concern is the potential for a participant to exaggerate or make up details of their own for the sake of the researcher, a less obvious but potentially more concerning point is the chance for the researcher to use materials to create a Hollywood ending or create a work of fiction (Conelley & Clandinin, 1990).

After the study concluded and was restoried, the researcher allowed participants to verify their stories. This meant each participant could validate the accuracy of their responses and interpretations (Creswell, 2013).

Researcher Positionality

In all research, researcher bias is inevitable. It is impossible to negate all bias in research no matter how hard a researcher may try. It is important to understand our positions and

influence within the collection of empirical materials and interpretation process, as the “researcher plays such a direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 53). Because of the postmodern worldview I have come to identify with as a researcher, it is critical to explain the influence my background and beliefs may have had on the scope of this study.

Throughout my life, I raged against the notion of becoming an educator like my parents. And sister. And grandfather. And aunt and uncle. I loved education – but I didn't want to teach like the rest of them. I went to college to become a graphic designer at Newsweek. And then a political lobbyist to work on behalf of non-profit organizations. I had a strong sense of justice and desire to fight for who I considered underdogs. However, after two days of substitute teaching, I felt a calling and I enrolled in credential school. Because of my love of words and the beauty I find in the subjectivity of interpreting texts, I became an English teacher. I had an ontological perspective of a social constructivist before I ever became a researcher, I just didn't know it. After 17 years of teaching, in addition to post-graduate education, I am now able to articulate my philosophical leaning and researcher perspective. I consider myself a qualitative researcher, particularly interested in the rhetorical and ontological assumptions that are knowingly (or unknowingly) made within educational research.

As a secondary teacher for eight years in an accelerated secondary school program designed to help historically disadvantaged groups and a former student who went through acceleration courses at a high school, I have formed strong opinions about secondary acceleration. My main concern while working at the accelerated school was watching students being encouraged to go beyond their emotional maturity level to progress through school faster. The economic drive to participate in these programs is strong, and while I understood that

financial need is a strong motivator to get through college faster, I often wondered at the long-term effect of an 18-year-old college junior or a 21-year old student with a master's degree. The societal pressure of acceleration seemed like it could take a toll on students, but as a teacher within the high school system, I wasn't sure what was happening once students made it through the maze of higher education. I became concerned that students would go out into the workforce without ever having experienced life...or at least, what I perceived to be important for life experiences. How would this impact society? How would this impact individuals?

On the surface, acceleration seems a boon to low-income families. Higher education in less time means less tuition money spent, meaning lower potential debt. There are more and more students with access to college options, which is supportive of an educated populace. As such, many recent graduates are finding that bachelor's degrees have become less important, and it is now master's degrees they need for many jobs. What will happen to our society if we keep this educational inflation going, and we continue to encourage students that they must churn through the system faster and faster? And why was the focus on students of color and/or a lack of economic means? By promoting a faster track into the workforce for historically disadvantaged youth, while not encouraging more privileged students to do the same, was this system actually supportive?

This study stemmed from these thoughts.

As a middle class, white, female, I had different experiences from many of my students, just as I had different life experiences than many of my low socioeconomic income, ethnically diverse, high school peers. I never worried about how I would pay for college; I had college money left to me by a benevolent grandparent. I never worried that I needed to get a job to support my family; I never needed to work until after college. (I wanted jobs and worked

consistently after my senior year of high school finished, but I didn't financially need to work.) I was in "gifted education" growing up and took part in a special college preparatory program during high school. However, it wasn't because I wanted to get through school faster; I loved school and still do. I wanted to be challenged and taking harder classes was the way for me to get that challenge. But I never once wanted to get out of school faster. I was too involved in clubs, band, soccer teams, and social events. In this regard, I will never be able to understand the desire to accelerate through schooling, so while my similar coursework allowed me some insider access to the world my students were in, I remained very much outside.

My love of school and the relative ease with which I went through the public education system afforded – and continues to afford – me a level of privilege experienced by very few of my concurrently enrolled students. Most were students of color, from the lower end of the economic strata, and could do nothing but worry about the finances of college as they were filling out applications in their senior year of high school. They may have viewed college as a necessary opportunity to afford them the lives they looked forward to one day, but before I started teaching, I viewed college as something everyone should have and could easily obtain if they worked hard enough. Adjusting this mindset after teaching was another reason I became so concerned about accelerated learning. What I believed to be the "Truth" of the easiness of college matriculation was one that, upon reflection, wasn't everyone's truth. Parental disagreements, lack of financial aid, transportation issues, accidental pregnancies, or familial illnesses...all of these were outside of my truth but were truths for my students. Not completely a new understanding, the subjectivity of truth became clearer day by day as I watched the agony with which students were applying to universities. After all, I am, in many ways, an insider to accelerated learning. I felt like I should be able to 1) automatically understand their experiences

and 2) be able to help them navigate the process. Because I couldn't, this cemented my ontological understanding that reality is subjective.

Working as a high school teacher in a relatively low-income populace, I saw the way students benefitted from accelerated coursework, I heard the drawbacks, and I have witnessed firsthand their workload and stress. However, I am an outsider to not only current implementations of accelerated programming, as I stand outside the backgrounds of many students who choose accelerated learning today. In this sense, I am an insider-outsider. It is important to note that the “hyphen can be viewed not as a path but as a dwelling place for people...a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). It is within this “space of paradox and ambiguity” that I expect found myself during this study.

If “positionality is thus determined by where one stands in relation to 'the other” (Merriam et al, 2001, p. 211), then my epistemological role is to identify not only the ambiguities that arise from my position but also to identify my preconceived notions about the participants I will be working with. How are they the other? How am I? This notion led to a better understanding of groups and my own potential biases. Though my perceptions and background cannot help but have influenced my data collection and findings, I did my best to remain “in the third space,” and understand this when interpreting findings or asking questions. I floated in this space, and it made my interpretations stronger. Add the philosophical belief that I needed to unpack my questions and the participant's answers with an eye to “account for and reflect vast changes in our society, cultures, polity, and economy as we move from a production to a consumption society” (Bloland, 2005, p. 523), and the findings have a distinctly broader application than simply Early College High Schools or concurrent enrollment.

It is with these understandings of myself that I developed my methodology and use of postmodern philosophy to review the data and literature. As a researcher with the epistemological belief that no one can present Truth as indisputable, unshakeable facts, it is with this leaning that I have told the story in Chapter Four.

Limitations

As with any naturalistic research, the perceived limitations from outside readers is twofold; one is that participants experience reality through their lenses and describe these experiences with a truth that is not necessarily verifiable. Second, that the researcher is interpreting the information through her lens. Therefore, some would consider this study limited by the potential for data distortion on both the part of participant and researcher. However, if one has read the previous sections of this chapter, it should be clear that these perceived limitations are, in fact, a strength of such a study. Not only because the intertwining of the story from the perspective of the researcher with the story told by the participant is a vital piece of the biography process, but also because this negotiation of truth within the research continues to be addressed throughout the methodology and collection of empirical materials. A way to check to ensure the researcher has not forced unwarranted meaning on the interpretations is to allow participants to review their portion of the narrative and validate its accuracy as reflective of their experiences. This negotiation of meaning is a part of the collaborative nature of biography.

Despite the collaboration that occurs throughout naturalistic inquiry, the researcher of an interpretive biography must also remember that she has a primary duty to the participants being studied, not her project or the greater good (Denzin, 1989). Also key to the researcher's positionality is understanding that to find meaning, coherence, or attempt to explain a phenomenon where none exists allows engagement “in a cultural practice that is just as

repressive as the most repressive of political regimes” (Denzin, 1989, p. 83). This awareness will allow this study's findings to be grounded in the assumptions of multiple truths, the influence of cultural context, and relay the idea that a life story is “a story that can never be completed” (Denzin, 1989, p. 81).

The most daunting ambiguity in this study is the implication that a participant's life can be understood and meaning made from single, separate, instances. This concern is that biographies reduce human experiences into frozen moments in time without context (Denzin, 1989). Indeed, Denzin (1989) argues, “the use and the value of the biographical method lies in its user's ability to capture, probe, and render understandable problematic experience...It is necessary to get as close to actual experience as possible” (p. 69). To do this, understanding the assumptions laid out at the beginning of this chapter, the researcher's positionality, and the subjective nature of naturalistic research, the interpretive biography may only represent a snapshot. But that snapshot will get us closer to understanding a piece of what accelerated learning programs influence their students. Ultimately, though, “there is no truth in the painting of life, only multiple images and traces of what has been, what could have been, and what now is” (Denzin, 1989, p. 81). This is known as Biographical Illusion (Denzin, 1989).

Trustworthiness

While presenting information through an Interpretive Biography may be impacted by Biographical Illusion, there are also other concerns related to limitations and trustworthiness in all research. Quantitative researchers believe trustworthiness is found through sample sizes, generalizability, experiment design, and replicability. These studies are searching for Truth. Naturalistic inquiry, particularly that viewed through postmodernism, is searching for an individual's truth. This section describes the steps I took to ensure trustworthiness in this

interpretive biography. These steps were 1) crystallizing the information, 2) thick description, and 3) member checking.

Traditionally, using a variety of sources in a qualitative study allows for data to be triangulated (Patton, 2012). Data triangulation is widely accepted by researchers and refers to using different sources of data within the study. Studies that use multiple methods are considered more trustworthy because of the ability to cross-check data (Patton, 2012), and this cross-checking is a way to corroborate internal validity. However, as Validity is a term that is positivist in nature, and all people's experiences, language, and truths are valid, I achieved this through broader means. As Richardson (2000) explains, straying from a “rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object” like a triangle to something like a crystal, that can “reflect externalities and refract within themselves,” is a different way to view the information (p. 935). In fact, she says, a crystal “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (Richardson, 2000, p. 935). Similar to the interconnected rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari, crystallization also looks at the interconnectedness of ideas, as well as the need to view materials through a variety of lenses. Assuming there is a correct version of a story that a researcher can prove is to assume that there is a single “Truth” to a story, a concept that the very philosophy of postmodernism denies. Therefore, crystallization enables researchers to interpret materials in a variety of ways. While Chapter Four of this dissertation will show how I interpreted the empirical materials, Chapter Five will explain further how to use different refractions to provide additional interpretations.

I used participant interviews and journaling, as well as interviews of relevant people in the participant's life as multiple forms of data to reflect the multiple dimensions of information that are gathered for this study. I checked for discrepancies and inconsistencies within stories

but firmly believe that individual experience and bias impacted recollections, both participants' and researchers'.

The thick description within narrative-style texts is important for multiple reasons. The first is for readability and general interest. Telling a story well requires thick, interesting, quotations to show rather than tell the readers what the participant experienced. Thick description shows non-participants the world that they are not a part of. Using thick descriptions throughout my interpretations (Chapter Four) allows readers to understand how I reached my conclusions in Chapter Five.

Often, researchers participate in member checking of data. Member checking occurs in qualitative research when the researcher allows the participant(s) to review their interviews or other written texts to confirm accuracy. This allows researchers to “solicit feedback on [their] preliminary or emerging findings from some of the people that [they] interviewed” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). I used informal member checking, emailing the participant for follow up responses or clarification. I used a more formal version of member checking when I asked the main participant to review Chapter Four for her thoughts, however, I did not ask for checks from the main participant's family members. While this was a step that allowed for some checking of details and ensuring that my bias did not change the intentions and experiences of the participant, I also did this step because, in any interpretive research project, the participant and the researcher are making meaning together and may need to revise the plot (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990). Essentially, this form of soliciting feedback allowed the data to be further crystallized.

Assumptions

Per Denzin (1989), interpretive biographies make the following assumptions:

1) the existence of others; 2) the influence and importance of gender and class; 3) family beginnings; 4) starting points; 5) known and knowing authors and observers; 6) objective

life markers; 7) real persons with real lives; 8) turning point experiences; 9) truthful statements distinguished from fictions. (p. 17)

Most important to this study were assumptions of gender, class, and family influences, as well as the notion of turning points within a life. As with any qualitative research, the notion of “Truth” is always subjective, however, these assumptions helped uncover some of the participants' truth. Taking into consideration these assumptions framed the methods used and the approach taken with participants. Denzin (1989) also said:

A person has a life or a set of life-experiences which are his or hers and no one else's. Life is lived on two levels...the surface and the deep. At the surface level, the person is what he or she does in everyday doings, routines, and daily tasks. At the deep level, the person is a feeling, moral, sacred, inner self. It is assumed by users of the biographical method that this deep, inner life of the person can be captured in an autobiographical or biographical document. (p. 28-29)

Because of this, not only is there an assumption that biographical data can be captured, there is also an assumption that both the participant and researcher positionalities influence interpretations.

Chapter Summary

To understand the perceptions of college graduates who participated in secondary accelerated learning programs, telling the story of an individual participant through an interpretive biography was the best qualitative research approach. This design required the researcher to tell the story of the main participant to support the stories that were told during open-ended interviews and additional data review. This information allowed the researcher to tell a chronological and reflective story. The crystallization process that was used to check the trustworthiness of this story is postmodernist and acknowledges that though there is no single Truth in storytelling, there are ways to reflect the truths of the participants while acknowledging the positionality of the researcher. While an interpretive biography may be questioned for its

ability to reflect a life story, it is an appropriate design for this study to be accessed by laypeople and potentially used beyond this dissertation study.

CHAPTER 4: INTERPRETATIONS

In this chapter, I present the life experiences of a recent college graduate who lived her entire life going through accelerated programming in either public schooling or private lessons.

I traveled an hour and half to where she was currently living, a few short weeks after her college graduation. After a huge breakfast at a local diner – where the waffles were photographed for social media posterity – we ended up sitting in the sun outside at a local coffee shop to conduct our interview. Though we were in public, our conversation did not seem to be anything the participant was worried about passersby overhearing. Every once in a while, car noises from the parking lot made some of the conversation a bit difficult to understand in recorded playback, but the content was not difficult at all. It was two people, chatting and reflecting on education. Not uncommon for a new college graduate and her former teacher.

I set out to tell Chesa's story because I knew her, and I was curious about the "after."

After high school.

After college.

After graduation.

What was going on now?

A student of mine during her high school years, when I sought a participant for this study through my network of former students, Chesa volunteered. Initially, I turned her down because of my prior experiences with her as a student. Then I realized that, while some researchers view having prior knowledge of a participant as detrimental to objectivity, an interpretive biography understands that, no matter what, there will always be a lack of subjectivity when reporting on

the lives of others (Denzin, 1989). Since my interpretations would present any participant's story through my eyes no matter who I selected, why not choose someone with whom I had a cordial relationship and knew wouldn't mind talking about her life? Thus, I decided to look deeper at Chesa's life in order to better understand her. And by understanding her, to better understand the impact of accelerated education. I tell the following stories of Chesa's life with the knowledge that "Lives are biographical properties. They belong not just to the persons, but also to larger social collectivities. Biographies are studies in morality, as well as personal and political power, fate, and social control" (Denzin, 1989, p. 29). Chesa is an individual, and while neither she nor I would presume to extrapolate from her experiences about every student or every accelerated program, this in-depth look at her life does allow for an understanding of the individual accelerated learner in the context of larger social collectives. Her interview is made richer with additional details from interviews with her father and second youngest brother, as well as written journal prompts and emailed musings that came after answering follow-up questions.

Introduction of the Participant: Here's Chesa!

At the time of our initial interview, Chesa Matataga (after she was asked to pick her own pseudonym she chose "celestial resilience" in her native Tagalog) was a 22-year-old naturalized Filipino-American. With hot pink hair, a brand-new college degree in Computer Programming, and a full-time job as a software engineer at a Fortune 500 company in California, Chesa sat her interview with me as a "real adult."

It had been one whole week of "real adulthood."

Apartment hunting and coming to terms with the fact that "I am in that college-is-still-happening mode even though I know I'm not gonna be in college in September" is "kind of a lot.

So, for the most part I just sit at home and relax and watch Netflix,” she said. Her somewhat high-pitched voice, baby face, and small stature make it easy to mistake her for someone years younger, especially when you talk to her about how much she likes to take pictures of her food for her Instagram account (like her waffles), drink copious amounts of boba tea, and take selfies on her phone while doing any number of random, “not-that-interesting” things.

Incredibly articulate, Chesa speaks fast, responds faster, and laughs easily. Despite the fact that Chesa said she had not had “time to really reflect” on college and life transitions, very little wait time was needed during our interview; almost as soon as I asked the questions Chesa had thoughtful and reflective responses ready. While I did have a prior relationship with Chesa as her teacher for two years during her high school tenure in 2012-2014, I hadn’t spoken to her much since she graduated and went to college, and I knew very little about her outside of her course performance during her high school years.

Pre-College Life

Born in 1995, Chesa is the second child of five (two girls followed by three boys). Her mother died in 2000 during the childbirth of her youngest brother.

I don’t really remember much of it, I was only five years old and so no one really talked to me about what had happened. I only know these things because I’ve eavesdropped over the years. She’s one of the biggest non-living inspirations for being great. The fact that everyone remembers her and the things that she’s done speaks a lot about the life she’s lived, and I think I want to aspire to be someone who, even after me dying, can still impact people.

It was unclear in the initial interview what made her mother so inspirational, other than her death, and I couldn’t help but wonder what her mother had done that made Chesa want to emulate her. Her written response is reflective:

I guess I’ve always figured that she was a great person (“she MUST be, she’s my mom!”) and never considered it. The stories I heard about her further amplified that—tho I realize now that maybe the stories I heard were all great bc that was the point of their story: to

tell me how great she was. I think maybe the desire to emulate comes from having been told “oh your mom would be so proud if she were here!” after almost every achievement (or something similar). It’s also heavily implied, due to my Catholic roots, that she is in Heaven and that’s something to aspire to. Maybe that plays a factor? I can neither completely deny or confirm, tbh. To get a lil emotional about it, one could say that I just wanted to fill that *void* with the image of the mom that I feel like I deserved. So maybe that’s why she’s this Very Great Person I Speak Highly Of, despite being far too young to really remember her personage.

It's not unexpected that a young child losing a parent would have such a reaction.

Fortunately, Chesa’s father, Mr. Matataga, made sure that he provided for his five children as a single parent. He takes his single-father duties seriously and was open about his feelings of responsibility.

[My son] told me one time when we were waiting at the dental clinic, ‘dad, you could have left us to our grandma.’ That’s what he told me. ‘You could remarry again.’ I said, ‘no, why should I do that? It is my obligation to raise you. Me and your mum wanted you to be in this world.’

His feelings of love for his children is clear.

I ask [my children], ‘how do you like the food that I cook?’ They said, ‘it is good, the taste.’ I tell them, ‘it is good and delicious because it is with love and care.’ That is how I raised them.

In addition to his love and care, Mr. Matataga also ensured educational enrichment for his children. As a young child, Chesa recalled that:

My dad always made it a priority for us to get our education. Whether it be a hobby or our actual education. He didn't believe in idle time. So in the summers he would enroll us in a summer program, either summer school, not necessarily for remedial classes. In the Philippines summer school doesn't necessarily mean remedial. When I wanted to be an artist my dad enrolled me in art lessons, I really got bored. I really didn't want to do it, 'cause I would draw and it would be really crappy and I'd just get discouraged and I didn't have the patience to practice and get better so I would quit the next summer. And then I got vocal lessons, I got Tae Kwon Do lessons, I got swimming lessons. I got a lot of introductions to a lot of things, so I feel like from the very beginning my dad's main goal was to educate us as much as possible.

In part, this was because of his belief that education could help families “get out from poverty.”

The sixth child of eleven siblings, Mr. Matataga said his parents passed on the mentality that “to

get out of poverty we need to finish college to get a degree and start from there.” It was also because he didn’t have an opportunity to experience extracurricular activities himself as a child.

Because we are poor, we cannot afford it. And then, when their mum died, I know their mum also wanted them to do those things. So after school, during summer time, what are they going to do? So to make that fruitful, I enrolled them. What do you want? You want swimming? Okay, go! You want dancing...go. Arts? Okay, go. I really wanted to prepare them to a much bigger life. Because what happened to my wife can happen to me, so I let them be independent by themselves.

Escaping poverty was a driving factor for the Matataga family to come to the United States, even though it was a struggle when they arrived.

I was viscerally aware of our family’s financial fragility. Knowing what I know now about the late 2000’s and immigration policies and all sorts of economic disparities, I feel like it was most definitely Bad Timing on our family’s part to have migrated at that time.

Coming to the United States at the age of 12, Chesa’s schooling experience was very different from what she was used to. Arriving a few months in to the start of seventh grade “was my very first time being in a public school. Really the very first time when my class was larger than like 30 people total.”

Living in one California city for one year, moving to another in eighth grade, another in ninth, to a new state in tenth grade, and then back to California in eleventh, Chesa had her fair share of being the new girl. She attended two different middle schools and three different high schools. The last, for eleventh and twelfth grade, was the concurrent enrollment school. All of these moves gave her a sense that:

There's a certain bravery that comes with always being the new girl and trying to make yourself fit in. So I always had to introduce myself; I got very good at that. I guess usually people felt discouraged when they would see friend groups that have already been formed, but in my case, if I had looked at everyone like that I would not have had any friends. So I just made it a point to do my best and if I found a group of people that I thought I would really click with I just went for it. So I guess that, the whole moving and always being the new kid gave me the bravado to always just try it if I wanted to do it, and if I didn't then it's fine because nobody knows me. It's really just my embarrassment and nobody else would remember.

Despite this lack of fear and willingness to meet new people, Chesa revealed that she “didn’t really keep in touch with a lot of my previous [friends]. For the most part I don’t really have any childhood friends. I think I didn’t grasp the concept of a best friend until college.”

Her schooling experiences didn’t always match up to the picture she had in her head of American schools, or her curricular needs. Academically, she attended a middle school with a program for “supposedly smart accelerated students.” In eighth grade she “had to take algebra twice, because they didn’t offer geometry, which was the next level [after seventh grade].”

I remember the transition between seventh grade and eighth grade was really annoying. Because I had to retake algebra because the other school that I went to [for eighth grade] didn’t offer the next level of class that I should have been in. That was really boring. Thankfully I liked math, but other than that I thought it was really silly. Maybe I should have gone to a different middle school.

Socially, she also experienced a rollercoaster of emotions and changes.

Fall semester [of freshman year] was horrible. [High School] was not kind to a transplant-slash-fresh-off-the-boat kid. I had pretty depressing lunch breaks sneakily eating sandwiches in the library; sometimes skipping lunch altogether; at one point, eating in the restroom. I don’t know how I stooped that low honestly. Probably teenage melancholy. I was definitely unhappy then.

Because of that her high levels of teenage angst, Chesa:

...focused on classes a lot because at least in class, the teacher’s the main focus. I don’t have to engage with other people, and if I do have to, then other people are mandated as well, so there’s no fear in social rejection. This doubling down on my academics (as you probably now know) became my way of fighting through my depressive lack of a social life throughout high school.

She had the opportunity for a fresh start when her family moved again, but:

When we moved to [another state in tenth grade] it was the first time in my life where I was very clearly the minority. I guess that’s like what I imagined an American high school would have been like, except that I had been in California, so it was a lot more diverse. When I was living in the Philippines, I imagined that I would be one of the very, very few people who had a color that was not pale. And that was the first time I’d experienced that.

It didn't help that her situation at home was financially uncertain for no real reason.

My dad, who I think has no problem expressing himself and his ideas in English, was fired from a job we moved all the way to [another state] for, because of "communication issues" after only a month or so of employment. It's hard not to swell with anger whenever I remember that day: I had just come home from school and was surprised to see him home early. He smiled at me and announced he'll be around the house a lot more in the next few weeks. I felt like crying then, but we both swallowed our anguish. He has *always* tried to soften the reality of our situation, but I have also been viscerally aware and burning with anger.

There was a turning point at the [out-of-state high school], that carried through with her to her return to California, a change in which Chesa began to

equate my happiness and worth with my grades. Because no one can beat me when it comes to academics. Because nothing was more certain than my A. Because nothing was better than my A. And this is right about the time when you met me—just before starting junior year. Hungry to achieve and desperate to prove to everyone at my new school that I was a force to be reckoned with. That I didn't need them as friends—they needed me.

Truthfully, this does match with my recollection of Chesa; on the first day I met her at our shared high school, she arrived with a portfolio of certificates proclaiming her a winner in multiple academic areas, and the thirst to join all of the electives the school had to offer. However, the desperation she describes didn't seem obvious – to me, the teacher – at least. She just seemed highly, intensely, capable. I would never have known about the inner turmoil I discovered through our interview and her journal prompts. I believe that fact merits noting in this context; as an outside perspective, reading Chesa's words, one might think she wasn't likable or social at all. From an adult perspective, I can say that was not the case, and from my outside views of her personal relationships, her peers agreed.

I was happy to be in an environment that challenged me more than my previous schools. I was thrilled to be [in a concurrent enrollment program]. It made me feel special. Like I was doing something groundbreaking here. Something that my previous high schools were not doing; something that'll set me apart so that it doesn't matter too much that I don't fit in. Because, I mean, I'm different. It's natural not to belong. But I was unhappy. I still wanted the social life. I wanted the friendships with the sleepovers and

the venting and the stupid, petty drama. I wanted to be part of something that didn't involve a grade, but I couldn't break those walls down.

In addition to dealing with all of her academic intensity and inner angst as a high school junior, Chesa then went into senior year needing to figure out the college application and acceptance process.

Senior year rolled by, and I started to panic about college. I was frustrated with college applications. I knew in my heart that I was good. That the essays I write are eloquent. That I have substance. That I will thrive in whatever discipline, wherever I go. But I wanted the Ivy Leagues. I wanted to get the bragging rights. I didn't get them. That was big for me. It was the first time I wasn't confident in my results, and the first time I didn't deliver near perfection. It was earth-shattering.

Despite the fact that choosing an accelerated program that paid for college tuition in high school seems like it would have been made for possibly huge financial implications, that did not seem to be a major part of why Chesa chose the school. She was still focused on "bragging rights" and "getting those As." However, she and her brothers

were very sensitive to whatever job my dad had (or did not have). I feel like it's easy to draw a connection to that to the state of the economy, immigration policies, and a Touch of racism.

Additionally, there was a huge sense of relief during her senior year when

[My father's] citizenship, which in turn became our citizenship, changed everything. He finally got that engineering position. We finally had room to breathe. I also didn't have to worry about scholarship or work eligibility as a US Citizen. It made SUCH a difference, despite there being nothing different about my dad or my skills. I will always be a mix of furious and grateful for my citizenship status.

While she may not have always been satisfied with her social life or had many friends with longevity, her family is close, and a huge reason for why she does what she does, telling me, "I just want to keep growing because I want to keep making my family even prouder than I already am, like, okay you think I'm great now, wait until, like, two years from now." Not that she needs to worry; the pressure she puts on herself comes from her perception of what her

family expects of her. She told me “my brothers believe that I’m some sort of saint. My sister knows that I’m not a saint, but I can get shit done if I really wanted to.”

Chesa’s not wrong. At least one younger brother DOES think she’s some sort of a saint, though he admits she may actually be human. Whether she wants it or not, though, “She’s on a really high pedestal,” her brother Bata told me, saying:

I get envious, because I’m like, ‘I want to be able to do that for myself, and then maybe somebody else. She set a bar, like the jungle gym bars. She has her own bar, and I wanted to hang onto that bar, too. And later on, I realized, ‘oh, I can make my own bar.’ So instead of sharing her glory, I can have my own glory.

It seems as though that pedestal has been there for a while, as her brothers followed in her footsteps, one playing the same instruments as her, all three attending the same high school, and even enrolling in similar electives. Bata told me:

All of her life, basically, she has been like, the big figure, because my biggest sister isn’t really that friendly. [Chesa] confessed that the reason she feels pressured to be successful in life is because she knows that we’re modeling ourselves after her. She modeled herself after our dad, and we modeled ourselves after her. She constantly feels bad whenever she fails a test because she’s like, ‘I can’t let my little brothers know that I’m failing because what if they start failing too?’ Like, she really kept her shortcomings to herself. But when it got really hard, she was running things by me like, ‘is it okay for me to drop this class?’ She didn’t want me and [my other brother] to think that we should just give up. We see it as [she] is understanding her own limitations.

Interestingly, after some time passed and he had been out at school on his own, Bata responded to my follow-up questions a bit differently than the initial interview. The pedestal may be a bit smaller, though he still recognized her impact and abilities.

I still think she’s a wonderful role model, but I think now I realize that I’m never going to be like her because she’s her and I’m me. Back then I really did just gravitate to the idea that I should be like her because, not to be rude to [other sibling name], she was the clear star in the family. But in both now and then, I think I still see her as a great motivation to strive for something more, but just now I think “something more” is defined differently than what it was a few years ago.

Different than many concurrently enrolled high school students, Chesa and her brothers were not first-generation college students. She was, however, the first in her family to attend an

American university, telling me that she “was the first person to go to a four-year university in America. And so no one really knew what to do” in her family when it came to college applications, scholarships, and admissions testing.

I had to do a whole lot of researching and I would say that I almost missed a lot of really good opportunities just because we didn't know that that was the thing I was supposed to do. I didn't know that I had to do subject tests to be in the College of Engineering. In terms of the college experience and my family... we just really didn't know what to expect.

Regardless of the bureaucratic side of college admissions, Chesa found her high school did help prepare her for college:

Not just because I was there for the longest time [two years of her high school experience], but I think that the way they structured their schedule to be in blocks of longer periods of time, we were able to tackle topics a lot more in depth instead of having just 45 minutes. That also mirrored one and a half hour lectures in college. I've noticed that I was able to pay attention a lot more than some of my peers who were dying to get out of a really long class. The feeling and the culture really prepared me for what I faced at [university].

I found it particularly interesting that when asked about some of the experiences that stood out the most about participating in concurrent enrollment, Chesa didn't talk about classes or extracurricular activities. She talked about people.

I think the set of people who attend the dual enrollment high school already says a lot about their character. So being with people who always aim high encourages you to also aim high and when I got to college with a bunch of really smart people in the classes I didn't feel like I was joining this really big pond, I just felt like it's a kind of continuation of already being surrounded by really smart people who work hard.

It's clear, though, that Chesa is a highly capable young woman. Even if I hadn't known that she'd graduated from high school with a Grade Point Average of above 4.0, while participating in multiple clubs and organizations and helping her father with her three younger siblings, I would have been able to tell from this interview. It seems to be a known fact in her family, as well. She said:

The first time I reached out to my older my sister and I told her ‘this is really hard. Like, this is way harder than anything I’ve ever done before,’ that’s when she said ‘well, ’cause we’re so used to just clicking, like everything clicks just really fast for us, but we’re not used to working really hard to get a result.’

This adjustment was frustrating for Chesa, and while her successes in life would indicate the ability to work hard and figure things out, her internal sense of what she needs to do is influenced by her family. “I just want to keep growing because I want to keep making my family even prouder than I already am, like, okay you think I’m great now, wait until like two years from now,” she said, sincerity shining in her eyes.

Her father and brother are already acknowledging her abilities. Her father, with an expected sense of paternal pride, told me how he “feels I am not that smart. Unlike my kids, they are all smart kids. I need to double time to learn things, I am not a fast learner like them.” Her brother, though he didn’t call her smart, told me that throughout his schooling, he:

wanted the Chesa influence, the Chesa track, because I felt it was the easiest path to success. I’ve got to take a step back whenever I get too envious of her, because I’m like, ‘oh my god, she already has a job. She’s making a living. She can provide for me, too, when I need it.’

This familial recognition of her abilities coupled with an incredibly endearing sense of immodesty (“I think that I am great; I’m amazing. I’m like, room for improvement? What’s that?” she said, laughing), led her to realize that “the traditional high school setting is a little bit boring for me. I think that because I understood things at a faster pace than some people I would zone off.”

Though the American educational system had good and bad experiences for Chesa – as it does for most students – her father ultimately wanted all of his kids to:

get educated in the US and please, go back to the Philippines and share what you have learned. Because I know they need more educated people from the US, to share your knowledge to the Filipinos. When I retire I want to go back and share what I’ve learned and go to a vocational school to teach.

While Chesa may not see a return to the Philippines in her future, she has been happily helping her younger brothers get through their own educational obstacle courses and remains as supportive of them through the next part of her journey as they were of her.

College Experiences: Excel Spreadsheets and Boba

“Oh my god, the amount of shit I accomplished in college is amazing!” was the first comment Chesa exploded with when I asked her the value of her college education. Similar to her reflection on high school, Chesa’s belief in the value of college focused on people and preparation for the future.

I just knew that there was a relationship, a really good positive relationship between college education and salaries and, like, a good life. I just can’t imagine a successful life without having gone through college. Maybe not necessarily in the way that like, oh you need a degree to get anywhere in life, but after having gone through college I now know that the resources and the network you make in college are invaluable.

In many ways, this echoes her father’s influence that “college gets you out of poverty.” But Chesa also looked at the people she surrounded herself with as part of the success equation, and she told me:

I started to accomplish a lot more when I stopped attaching my self-worth to how close I was to a 4.0 GPA. (This doesn’t mean that I stopped vying for Dean’s List. That was always on my radar; other things just took precedent. Other things made me feel as satisfied with my progress/success as a student.) I think that being surrounded by people who aim high and work hard really makes me feel like I should do better, which is, to me is really groundbreaking because I already know that I’m really great.

Her healthy ego served her well in college, as it allowed her to keep striving for improvement and not letting other people intimidate her, and she used it to strive for improvement.

[Classmates and I] had a lot of conversations about in their first couple year about how ‘[they] used to be super smart and now [they’re] just really dumb,’ and I’m like, ‘I don’t think you’re dumb it’s just that you’re finally at a place where everyone is at your level. And you either get better or you fall behind.’ You either get bigger or you get eaten by sharks.

When describing a time when she felt like giving up on her education, Chesa laughed, and without pause said, “Oh my god, sophomore year, spring quarter, [beginning computer science].” While she is self-admittedly always confident in her skills, that course made her consider quitting computer science as a major because “it just got super difficult during my end of my sophomore year, which is spring quarter.” She never considered dropping out of college, because that wasn’t ever an option in her family. It didn’t matter what she did; “My dad was always like, ‘you can do whatever you want with your life as long as you graduate with a piece of paper, that’s fine.’” This struggle second year with a course that “was supposedly a ‘weeder’ class where you really know whether you a future in programming or not” made her feel “super discouraged.” I daresay it was probably the first time in her life Chesa had ever been truly challenged. Her struggles in this class, though, brought her closer to her family and “that was the very first time I talked to my family about my college experience.” Prior to that, she said, they just made sure she was eating and sleeping, and:

sometimes my dad would comment on my Facebook statuses. One of my ranting ones. And he would be like, ‘just enjoy life.’ It really annoys me that he means that a lot, but I can’t just enjoy life because I have homework to do. If anything, I was a lot harder on myself than my family was in terms of expectations for college.

Famous with her friends for her college Facebook posts “ranting” about her challenges during her college experience, Chesa had a hard time talking to her family about her struggles. She wanted to please them, but she wanted to be honest. She wanted to help her younger brothers, but she didn’t want to disappoint them. She often took to Facebook to express some of those feelings, but often felt guilty afterwards. After all,

That’s a lot of pressure because your sibling is aiming for excellence and you’re over here like, I don’t want to do work because I’m too tired. And my dad, he’s been commuting for his work and knowing that he wakes up at 4:00AM and I can’t even get my ass to my 10:00AM [class]...that’s a lot of guilt.

One of the most reflective and enlightening posts she wrote about was her 705-word diatribe posted soon after graduation, discussing how “Hard work DOES NOT EQUAL torturing yourself for hours on end!! Someone else's success DOES NOT EQUAL your failure/inadequacies!!” She shared many of her struggles during college, including how:

there were many, MANY days when I did absolutely nothing except breathe and lie down on my bed (seriously. nothing. not even Netflix.) because I was feeling unmotivated. I started skipping meals and lectures, then I started missing out on my 8-hours of sleep. I slept less than 5 hours per night because I have made myself So Busy that 24 hours in a day wasn't enough. It was awful + I hated everything / everyone / every day.

Very few people who were not privy to these more private thoughts, would think that this vibrant, intelligent, go-getter was anything other than exuberantly happy with life. Either because everything she wrote was done with a sense of humor, or because it was like every other college student: slang, terrible grammar, and all. For example: “idk fam i feel like 80% of the people that know me think all i do is ~grind~ but tbh i probably procrastinate 300% harder than most of u.” Her ability to codeswitch between teachers, employers, and peers becomes incredibly apparent when one is able to access all of her communication channels. I would have been hard-pressed to believe that this was true, however, had I not seen it for myself.

Her social media sharing didn't stop once she graduated from college. One of her most recent posts, months after our initial interview, showed that being out of school did not dim her sense of duty. At a networking event for her current employer, she was asked what she wants to be remembered for. Though not given an opportunity to share it at the event, she took to Instagram to let her friends and family know that:

I want my legacy to speak about how hard I worked to be successful and happy. I want it to be known that I earned every opportunity I was given, and every bit of joy I exuded was built through my relentless pursuit to be that: happy with myself. I want to be remembered as strong, as someone who really, REALLY tried to be somebody, even when it was hard, and especially when it seemed impossible.

Her legacy with her family is already set; her siblings and father are her biggest fans, and never thought she had anything to feel guilty for.

Two years behind her in school, Bata went to a different sought-after public university. (The brother in between them attends a third well-known public university. Her older sister completed law school in the Philippines.) Like her, Bata had been highly successful in high school, and had even been high school valedictorian. If anything, her brother appreciates that she was honest when she struggled.

She helped me realize that I don't have to get straight As. It was really devastating to take your first midterm [in college], like, your first wave of midterms and get Fs on all of them. I was just like, 'what is wrong with me? I don't think college is for me. I think I should just reevaluate if I even want to be here or not.' But then, I had one phone call with her, and she was just like, 'Dude. Do you realize how many Fs I've gotten on tests?' So, she helped salvage what was going to be, like, an academic suicide.

It wasn't until her second two years of college that Chesa started to realize all the things she could do in school besides attending class, doing homework, and studying.

There was a time where I was flying, almost like every month to go to some really cool thing. I was flying out to [programming competitions] to compete with my coach; I was flying out to conferences because people thought I was a really good leader and they want me to represent things [for the school]. The people I met, they're really great people and they aim really high; they're working for some of the best companies globally right now.

Again, that focus on people and preparation. The preparation part exhibited itself in her four-year plan, the working document she used throughout college to plan her quarterly classes and track the credits she needed for graduation.

I had this excel spreadsheet called Four-Year Plan before I even stepped foot into [University]. Then, when I would not do as well in the class, I would have to rethink my goals. So I had to have like four year plan 4.0, 4.5, 5.0, and then there were study abroad plans and maybe-you're-gonna-intern-instead plans. I had a lot of contingency plans and I think that's one of the things that...well, really I don't know if it's the dual enrollment high school but I remember the handouts the counselor would give us in high school and it would be like, 'okay here are a list of classes, if you take this class this semester then

maybe you can take this class next semester and then next year you'll do these.' So having that mindset of already planning ahead.

But it wasn't just the preparation; it was also Chesa's sheer enthusiasm for post-secondary school.

I was just really stoked about college so it's like, 'I'm gonna do this, this, and this.' And then I got to a point in time where it's like, 'okay that's not gonna work anymore so I have to redo it,' and I'm just gonna save this as the next one. Four-year plan 9.0. That's what I graduated with.

Due to her diligence in planning, the fact that she regularly took at least one class more each quarter than most of her peers ("I was pretty crazy my first two years. Freshman year they suggested that we take, you know, 13, 14, 13, [course credits] you know the really minimum, but I was taking, 18, 20, 20"), and the 12 credits that were waived by the school because the college credits she took concurrently meant "my social science units were completely full, arts and humanities were like halfway there, and then also I tested out of all of the writing English classes." In order to graduate in four years, with a Bachelor's in Computer Science and a minor in Communications, she:

Took the route within the College of Letters and Sciences [for computer science], which is not really easier in terms of classes because it's still the same class, but I didn't have to take the [computer] hardware classes. I took advantage of the double dipping of units, being smart about what electives to take because some electives counted for my both my communications and my computer science degrees.

While four years may not seem like an accelerated amount of time to graduate from college, these days, it's difficult in today's college landscape for students to complete their requirements for math and science intensive majors, such as Computer Science, in four years. The fact that Chesa attended an accelerated high school for two years and managed to have 12 credits (one quarter) waived shows how much faster she could have gone through if she'd started there when

she was a freshman. What's interesting, though, was finding out what she thinks about her four years in college after graduating.

In general, I wish I hadn't felt pressure to rush my college, or my education experience. Looking back during my senior year I started to see all of these other things that could have made a fifth year a lot more fun. I was always focused on getting out in four years, I've got to do it in four, I've got to do it in four. But the closer I got to ending it in four years the more I wished that I had planned for five years instead because then I could have gone abroad, I could have double minored, I could have done all these other things and I think that that's really the only other thing I would change. That I wish I wasn't so rushed, I didn't feel so rushed.

I asked her why she felt so rushed. This was why I was here, after all. Why accelerate at all?

Why this sense of pressure? Was it from her family? Wanting to please her father? The memory of her mother? Her younger siblings? That unerring confidence that seems to make her think she can take on the world? The answer:

No one.

No one was rushing me. I knew my dad took five years, and like, not even five consecutive years; it was intermittently. I don't know why I was rushing, really gunning for four years. It's kind of a big regret because I could have taken my time and kind of enjoyed it more, but...

The normally instantaneous responder had to stop and pause. After a thoughtful moment, she slowly said:

People who excel are people who do it fast. So, I was thinking, 'okay if I do it in four years, I'm one of the good ones, because I did it fast.' There's still a lot of stigma about doing four plus years. Even with my friends...some of my friends are going to be graduating next year as opposed to this past June. And there was a lot of awkward situations in which half of the group were getting ready to walk for commencement and the other half were not. And it was really weird because some people were very visibly upset that they weren't graduating with us. And I don't know if that was because they just felt like they were being left behind or because they felt really inferior; I think it's a little bit of both. And I...I couldn't really talk to them about it either because I was one of the ones on the winning side.

I want to take a moment to point out the use of "winning side." Chesa really didn't think she was better than her friends, or that they were inferior for graduating after a slightly longer time.

She didn't think they were losers. But she was using "winning" to describe how they might have felt like losers. Despite having failed classes, she still managed to graduate in four years, but she understood why some people might not have been able to get through. Her analytical brain allowed her to see that some students:

could have tried your hardest but just the professors teaching style just didn't match your learning style. Or it just may be the lecture style, it just may be like you didn't get it this time, but next time you'll definitely get it, which I have proven: the second time I took it I did way, way better.

Taking all of those credits each quarter actually allowed her to fail classes and still graduate in the "normal" amount of time, something no one who knew her in high school would have ever doubted. Nor would her family. It's also safe to say that no one who knew her in high school would have expected her to ever fail any classes, either. But because she wasn't slowing down her expected graduation, I wager that no one would ever know.

Beyond Schooling

A month after graduation, when our first interview took place, Chesa acknowledged that, though her pride may have taken a hit by being in the bottom of her class, after graduation she was okay not being at the top.

I was always in the top percentile but not really the, the, the highest and I was, a part of me is like wow, I could have been number one but the other part of me is like, it's fine, I'm still at the top. As long as I'm not in the bottom it will be okay. At some point during senior year I started saying "hey, D's get degrees, yo." I think once I got the whole secured future, then I loosened up on my personal standards. I mean, I'm already hired so no one cares.

Six months after graduation, I asked Chesa if she still felt the same way about the pace at which she completed college.

My four years at [University] were some of my very best, so I think a part of me will always regret leaving "too soon." I experienced and accomplished so much there that I feel like I'll always wonder what another year there would have done for my personal

development. I definitely should have tried harder to study abroad, even it meant stretching beyond the four years.

She told me that when she first talked to me, so soon after college graduation, she:

was very conscious of the change that was happening—that I was a Real Adult with a life that should be filled with more than just Netflix and takeout—but I was very passive about it. I didn't really do much to get out of this funk and adapt to the change (which I know is definitely off-brand for me). But now that I have hobbies and plans, I don't feel as lost. I no longer feel like I'm living in a post-college, pre-“rest of my life” limbo. I feel like I'm just living my life.

Chesa does have a few regrets, though. And they center around how quickly she completed her course work.

If I ever get a chance to start all over, I would definitely take it slower. I'd not take 22+ units in my first few quarters. I think I would have done a fifth year and maximized the amount of experience I can get. I would have studied abroad, double minored in Japanese and Communication, and majored in Computer Science, all while kicking ass with [my extracurricular club]. I would have gone to twice as many more [events] and I would have met even more amazing, inspiring people to learn from. I would have probably not gone into the industry as early, actually. I'd probably be on my way to a master's at this point.

Regardless of accelerated classes, graduation, first in class, last in class, family pressures...Chesa said that no matter what she says now about what she did or didn't do in college, “That's probably just part of who I am as a person—that I'd never be truly satisfied and would always want to have done something better or improve on something for the next time.”

I asked Chesa a year after the initial interview the regret she said she felt to go through so quickly. Did she still feel regret about choosing not to study abroad?

I may have skipped telling you the reason because I felt (and still feel) sheepish about it... Honestly, it's because I didn't get into the program that I wanted. I really wanted to do the Japanese study abroad and even earned this super great, super competitive scholarship (\$10,000 [Scholarship Program]), but I wasn't on top of the program dates. By the time I got around to applying for it, all of the guaranteed and waitlist spots were taken. Finally, verification of the procrastinator that lived inside that I'd heard about but never

seen...how could I? She made her social media posts just funny enough and kept the harsh

details in her inner circle that it took some distance from the situation and me prying to get the truth. She admitted to having some regret during the summer she wanted to go but felt that she turned it in to an amazing experience for herself, as “Not being able to go to Japan made me shift my mindset towards getting an internship instead. I worked for [company] that summer which then became a full-time offer.”

Themes

This inquiry was guided by the questions: What are college graduates’ perceptions and understandings of their experiences in secondary accelerated programs? In what ways do college graduates perceive value from their experiences in secondary accelerated learning programs? In what ways did participation in a secondary accelerated learning program impact the college experiences of college graduates? Because of this, the interview protocol (Appendix C) clearly focused on school, acceleration, and questions regarding educational background. What I quickly realized throughout the interview and in reviewing the transcripts was that Chesa does not see education as separate from self or family. Education is deeply ingrained in everything she has done, from very early in life in the Philippines to now, graduating from a well-known research institution in California.

Through analysis of the empirical materials, it became clear that the main participant of this study was conflicted about her experiences with accelerated learning. While exceptionally bright and appreciative of the academic challenge in her pre-university schooling, Chesa was regretful of her choice to speed through her university years and felt that she could have spent more time enjoying the experiences and branching out into a variety of additional extracurricular and academic opportunities.

There is a uniqueness to Chesa's journey that no one else will ever be able to have; no two people ever have exactly the same experience or approach life in exactly the same way. Because of my experiences, it is also true that no one will ever tell Chesa's story in the same way. That said, after pulling apart the transcriptions and other empirical materials, I identified the following major areas of impact on Chesa's educational journey: 1) family duty, 2) social/peer-to-peer relationships, 3) academic readiness, and 4) academic challenges and regrets.

In the sections that follow, I review empirical materials from the current study and demonstrate the relationships between these themes, and the use of interpretive biography and postmodernism as my framework, before returning to the research questions. Finally, in Chapter Five, I discuss conclusions that can be drawn from them, recommendations for further research, along with policy and practice implications.

Family Duty

It is widely understood that family is an important factor relating to how well students will perform in school (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). In Chesa's case, her obligation to her family was one of the overarching themes in the study, encompassing and influencing her every action and decision. The information collected about Chesa's schooling and educational values must be refracted through the crystal (Richardson, 2000) of family duty in order to understand the interconnected rhizomes of school and family in the Matataga family. With three younger brothers, a hardworking, widowed, immigrant father, and the only female living in the household, Chesa's sense of responsibility for her family members and what she viewed as her duty to them was almost tangible throughout our conversations. Conversely, the family's reverence and expectation that she would be great at anything she set her mind to was also clear. While difficult to determine if their admiration was because of her accomplishments, or her

accomplishments were a result of a sense of duty and their admiration, it is clear that the relationships between Chesa and her family members is one of trust, mutual regard, and love.

As we can see when looking at Table 2, Chesa felt a strong sense of responsibility to get a degree, meeting the expectations set for her by her father. She felt pressure to perform in a way that would be inspirational to her younger siblings, while also supporting them in their own journeys. While all of her family members were supportive of her on an emotional level, none of them were able to support her with her workload or with the administrative side of university life, such as applications and college entrance exams. Her older sister – the only family member who was currently struggling with similar issues – was attending law school in the Philippines. Add on top of all of that a sense of loss that she never really got to know her mother – except through others' recollections of an amazing woman who has passed away too soon – and the drive to be memorable through excellence is strong.

This study highlights the need children may have to accelerate through their schooling. There are varying reasons; no two children are the same, but the idea of pleasing family, being able to more quickly support others, or simple guilt for what parents or other family members have sacrificed would be strong motivators for many young people. In conjunction with a lower socio-economic status and the difficulties of being a first-generation student in the United States, the pressure for some may be overwhelming. Chesa, however, illustrates how some students may choose to handle that pressure.

Table 2
Impact of Family Duty on Accelerated Learning

Theme	Participant Narrative
Family Duty	<p>“My dad always said that he can’t give us land or money as inheritance, but he can make damn sure that we’ll always be well-fed and well-educated.”</p> <p>“My dad was always like, ‘You can do whatever you want with your life as long as you graduate with a piece of paper, that’s fine.’”</p> <p>“[My dad’s] main desire is for us to go to college and finish, no matter how long it takes. Anything else we do after that is entirely up to us. But while we’re under his roof, our main job is to be a student and get that degree.”</p> <p>“Having my brothers...following me in this college trail...I felt really pressured to pave the path really well for them.”</p> <p>“My sister was pursuing law school. That’s a lot of pressure because your sibling is aiming for excellence and you’re over here like, ‘I don’t want to do work because I’m too tired.’”</p> <p>“In a sense that pressure and that guilt pushed me to excel but knowing that they would support me either way made it a lot easier to be okay that I’m not getting the A’s.”</p> <p>“I think that I was rushing because I felt like I needed to get out and get a good job ASAP so I can start contributing to the family and my dad can rest easy. It’s that first-generation immigrant child burden that definitely made me hell-bent on graduating in four.”</p> <p>“She’s one of the biggest non-living inspirations for being great. I think the fact that everyone remembers her and the things that she’s done speaks a lot about the life she’s lived, and I think I want to aspire to be someone who even after me dying can like still impact people.”</p>

As we read in Chapters One and Two, main reasons accelerated learning programs appealing are because of a desire for college and career readiness, the speed with which to “get out” of school faster, the support for underrepresented groups, and students’ need to be more challenged (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009; Kaniuka & Vickers, 2010; Webb & Mayka,

2011). Additionally, we know that many of the students participating in such programs come from traditionally underserved populations and are often targeted because of those backgrounds (Webb & Mayka, 2011). Chesa's family background is the reason she fits into all three of these categories in some capacity; other students may only fit in to one or two. Her family is also the reason she survived her intense schooling experience, and their relationships and support were highly impactful to her follow-through and sanity.

There are multiple studies that discuss the impact of acceleration on specific demographics of students; males of color (Hoffman & Webb, 2010), low-income students (Berger et al, 2010), and first generation to college (Noble et al, 1998). However, none appear to address the intersectionality Chesa brings to the table, nor do they discuss their participants in a biographical way. While the stories all of these students have will be different, as they and the researchers reporting them are different, identifying the similarities within the theme of family duty brings us closer to identifying why such secondary programs are sought after.

Chesa's case should cause educational stakeholders in accelerated learning programs to revisit their understanding of the impact of family structures on the students they are serving. In secondary schools, parent involvement is often low, especially those with more culturally diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Thus, accelerated programs and schools need to honor the importance of family within their curriculum and structures in order to ensure support for those students who may not have it at home.

Social Connections

There were two threads that ran through my interactions with Chesa: 1) she is very aware of her own remarkable abilities, and 2) she felt like she did not belong socially for a very long time...even within her accelerated school. She acknowledged both during face-to-face

interviews and written responses. She expressed how, during high school, she felt a need to compensate for her lack of a social circle by demonstrating academic prowess...something that was easy for her to do. She sought external validation and was crushed by college admission rejection letters. Her self-worth, at the time of her high school graduation, was connected to the notion that her family, outside adults, and peers viewed her as impressive. Her root system and her outward appearance was tangled, and like many teens, she was attempting to find a way to untangle them and have the roots and the surface appearance match.

Looking through Table 3, while Chesa's high school social life was, in her opinion, lackluster, it becomes clear that college is where she found a group of friends with whom she felt she belonged. Ranting at the dining table, teaching her what a best friend is; college Chesa was a much better fit than high school Chesa.

There are many reasons that high school can cause students to feel lonely or outcast. The facets of the crystal are refracting around teenage hormones, large schools, teacher or peer apathy...and many of these things are often blamed for student social interactions. In Chesa's case, though, it appears as though her loneliness was a combination of constant movement and unrealistic expectations. Attending three high schools in her four-year tenure was not easy, and she constantly felt "like the new girl." While she may have had the confidence to make friends and become involved, her immigrant vision of what "American high school" should look like seems as though it could have gotten in her way. Imagining constant sleepovers, cheerleading, and football games, and instead being one of the few students of color at a large school in which you knew no one and were bored by the classes you were taking...well, that didn't seem to spell social success for Chesa. Though she moved again to a small early college high school, she

arrived as a junior, missing many of the beginning of school friend-making rituals that most students participate in when all are new.

Table 3
Impact of Social Relationships on Accelerated Learning

Theme	Participant Narrative
Social relationships	<p>“Doubling down on my academics became my way of fighting through my depressive lack of a social life throughout high school.”</p> <p>“If I wasn’t going to hang out and watch movies with friends, then I might as well rack up these awards and get my ‘external validation’ from adults in ‘Associations,’ right?”</p> <p>“I was thrilled to be in an early college. It made me feel special. Like I was doing something groundbreaking here. Something that my previous high schools are not doing; something that’ll set me apart so that it doesn’t matter too much that I don’t fit in. Because, I mean, I’m different. It’s natural not to belong.”</p> <p>“If I can’t dominate in academics, and I can’t get the friendships, then what can I?”</p> <p>“Being surrounded by people who aim high and work hard really makes me feel like I should do better, which is, to me, really groundbreaking because I already know that I’m really great...”</p> <p>“I felt like I belonged. I felt like I was on par with the smartest of the bunch in my calculus class, and that I should be performing at the top 10 percentile. I’m not sure if that’s because of the bravado I got from having those college classes under my belt, or if that’s just me as a person, but that’s definitely the feeling I got.”</p> <p>“Being with people who always aim high encourages you to also aim high and when I got to college with a bunch of really smart people...I didn’t feel like I was joining this really big pond...it was just a kind of continuation...”</p> <p>“We used to have this thing where we would come back home from like a really shitty day and we’ll just sit across the table from each other and just rant and be like, ‘Yeah, well actually today this girl did blah blah blah,’ and then someone takes their turn at ranting”</p> <p>“I think I didn’t really grasp the concept of a best friend until college.”</p>

Spin the crystal again, and we can view Chesa's schooling through her high ability. As with many intelligent students who skip grades or are not challenged by the rigor of their school program, as well as impressed upon with the importance of school success and duty to family, Chesa seems to have not fit in her high school world. High achieving students within accelerated systems may have a harder time with peer to peer social relationships. It may be due to the competitive nature of such schools, or because students who are gifted or in other specialty programs have a harder time relating to peers (Brody, Muratori, & Stanley, 2001, Pollins, 1983; Robinson, 2004; Tookey, 1999). It may also be difficult for some students to form friend groups and create bonds with others. While published research on this topic addresses secondary acceleration's social experiences in a fairly complimentary way (Combs & Saenz, 2016; Cravey, 2013), an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Morgan, 2015) found that many students struggled with the social connections once they went to post-secondary institutions. This case study confirmed that many accelerated students feel a lack of social connection, at least once they leave their small accelerated school, however, Woodcock and Beal (2013) found in their narrative study that three first-year university students at sophomore standing self-reported not feeling much different from their freshman peers. When we look at the crystal's facets at chronological age, it appears to trump college grade standing. The discrepancy between published findings is not a surprise; all humans are different, and each researcher and participant story are viewed through different lenses. It can be agreed upon, however, that social connections are considered important within the context of studies about accelerated programs, and this study is able to add another dynamic to the existing research, as Chesa is a graduate from a postsecondary institution.

Because of the importance of social connections between students (Astin, 1993), it is recommended that strong relationship-building programs for peer-to-peer in and out of classroom activities take place at such schools at the secondary level. Schools and districts should also encourage and train teachers to use collaborative strategies within classrooms, while campuses should take any opportunity to go beyond simple academics and focus on teambuilding and leadership for their students. Secondary schools should also work with students in grade twelve to develop plans for the types of extracurricular activities they want to be involved with in their post-secondary institution and teach them to research the social side of college, rather than simply academic skills. If more schools embrace explicit instruction in the skills needed to socialize, rather than academic-only skills, students may feel more comfortable in both secondary and post-secondary educational institutions.

Academic Readiness

One thing research agrees upon is that accelerated programs typically prepare students for the academic side of postsecondary education. There is strong agreement that students in accelerated programs have increased attendance, more engagement, strong sense of student investment, higher grades, and higher rates of college attendance than their demographically similar, non-accelerated, counterparts (An, 2012; Combs & Saenz, 2016; Cravey, 2013; Edmunds et al., 2013; Webb & Mayka, 2011; Woodcock & Beal, 2013). While the import of these elements as indicators of success is another paper entirely, the current research believes it is clear: students who participate in these programs are successful academically.

Academic readiness is the element of Chesa's scholarship that she feels is her strength; not only in the preparation she received from her secondary school, but in general throughout her life. Her competitive nature and appreciation for being with other students who had the same

goals and high sense of motivation allowed her to succeed in high school; the preparation that came from her rigorous schooling allowed her to succeed in university work. I do not doubt that Chesa would have been highly successful regardless of what type of high school she attended; accelerated learning was not the reason she was ready for college work. Her high intelligence, strong work ethic, and family and friend relationships were all reasons she continued to succeed. Her need to prove that she is as impressive as her mother, as capable as her family believes her to be, and her general desire to be useful also enabled this success. However, the academic readiness that came from participating college coursework while in high school was something that supported her in her postsecondary education, as we can identify in Table 4, and is another facet in crystallizing the materials in this study.

The one thing that was not taught was Chesa's sense of organization and planning. Generally, researchers limit academic readiness to educational attainment and factors affecting student success as related to that attainment. What also needs to be considered a part of academic readiness is also how well students adapt to the administrative preparation and planning that goes into success at the postsecondary level. Chesa's "Four-Year Plan 9.0" was not something that was taught to her by her high school, counselor, or other university advisors. That was all her; the "double dipping of units" and having her general education units mostly finished was not because her high school taught her how to plan a schedule like that, nor was it because of her university academic advisor. That was her software programming, mathematically oriented brain.

Table 4
Impact of Accelerated Learning on Academic Readiness

Theme	Participant Narrative
Academic Readiness	<p>“...in blocks of longer periods of time we were able to tackle topics a lot more in depth. I was able to pay attention a lot more than some of my peers who were used to four to five hour blocks and they just were dying to get out of a really long class.”</p> <p>“Some people say [high school] is harder than college. I definitely disagree. The long lectures [in college] were very similar to [high school] so that really helped the transition.”</p> <p>“I had to take a couple of [general education] classes and I tested out of all of the writing English classes. So that saved me 12 units.”</p> <p>“I took advantage of double dipping of units...and really being smart about what electives to take.”</p> <p>“[Going in to university] my social science [general education] units were completely full. Arts and humanities were, like, halfway there.”</p> <p>“Being with people who always aim high encourages you to also aim high and when I got to college with a bunch of really smart people...I didn’t feel like I was joining this really big pond...it was just a kind of continuation...”</p> <p>“In terms of electives we had a lot freedom...I thought that was a really great introduction, looking back now, when I was in college and choosing classes for myself.”</p>

If I refract the materials through the crystal yet again, I can see that this aspect of her success was an exception to the rule of how students are prepared for graduation and matriculation. As a rule, schedule planning may be introduced by an advisor or teacher, but Chesa perfected it beyond what was taught. This level of readiness was not something she obtained from her school, but she was given more opportunities to perfect the skills since she started planning her own college course schedule two years before many other students even begin thinking about theirs. This type of skill is something that should be explicitly taught in the secondary level,

because it shouldn't fall to students to either a) teach themselves how to be successful within the bureaucracy that is college admissions and scheduling, or b) rely on someone else to plan for them.

Academic Challenges & Regrets

A main reason for the Advanced Placement program's existence was to address the need of students who were slacking off or bored in their last one-two years of high school (Phillips Academy, 1952). Further, most students who are accelerated are typically done so to alleviate boredom or discontent (Lubinski, 2004). Chesa is no different. Not challenged in terms of course content, these students are challenged by needing to pay attention and participate in classes they don't care about.

Never a troublemaker, Chesa would simply "zone off" in classes she didn't find to go at a fast-enough pace. The movement between schools meant that there was some repetition in her course content, and she self-admittedly stopped paying attention when she understood something faster than the teacher could teach a subject. Because of this, Chesa enjoyed the level of freedom her accelerated program allowed her, as she was able to choose her classes and they were appropriate to her academic level (Table 5).

Chesa's challenge was not in how difficult the tasks were, her challenge was in tolerating classes that weren't difficult enough. This is a common problem for gifted students (Rogers, 2007), and this is again where Chesa's intersectionality impacts the findings of this study. Many students who participate in accelerated secondary programs like concurrent enrollment are not gifted; they are hard workers and/or highly motivated. Chesa is all of these and did not need the same content at the same time as many of her peers. This furthers the case for schooling to not

be tied to age and chronology, as “learning is timeless; temporality is the process of becoming and not the act of arriving” (Slattery, 1995, p. 628).

Table 5
Academic Challenges and Regrets

Theme	Participant Narrative
Academic challenge	<p>“A traditional high school setting is a little bit boring for me. I think that because I understood things at a faster pace than some people I would zone off.”</p> <p>“I took college level calculus my junior year...so I thought that was really cool because then I got to actually take a class that I actually needed instead of maybe repeating something I already knew.”</p> <p>“Some people that I talk to at [university] were used to being the smartest in their class and we had a lot of conversations about...[they] used to be super smart and now [they’re] just really dumb, and I’m like, ‘I don’t think you’re dumb it’s just that you’re finally at a place where everyone is at your level.’”</p> <p>“I don’t know why I was rushing, really gunning for four years. It’s kind of a big regret, because I could have taken my time and enjoyed it more.”</p> <p>“If I do it in four, I’m one of the good ones.”</p> <p>“I’m now realizing that maybe I felt pressured by that [Dual Enrollment high school] tagline—how students can graduate with their college degree in two years because they’ve already done two years of their college in high school.”</p>

The entire focus of all accelerated programs is the act of arriving. If we look at Chesa in relation to the other research in this area, her feeling of readiness to tackle college coursework after her rigorous high school and community college classes during secondary school is echoed by many other early college and concurrently enrolled students, but all of the research focuses on arriving. Finishing. Graduation. A clear, set, end point, regardless of the journey. Chesa’s

crystal refracted to show her that graduating in four years means she's "one of the good ones," and the roots she has set down with the help of her father is that finishing is what matters.

Academic readiness and feeling challenged by rigorous coursework is a feeling many students in these programs desire, whether high school or college. Chesa's regret about not studying abroad or participating in more social activities while in college shows how the deeply ingrained sense that the end point is more important than the process may impact student decision-making. I posit that such a mindset in many young people and educators alike is the problem with the entire educational system.

Chapter Summary

Throughout Chesa's schooling experience, she felt social isolation, along with academic boredom and challenge, but through it all her family remained loyal and devoted to her, supporting her choices and lifting her up when it was needed. The themes of family duty, social interaction, and academic challenge and readiness were all significant throughout Chesa's journey towards college graduation. These themes are interconnected, and their implications for both this topic and further research will be discussed further in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents and reflects on the findings of this interpretive biography.

Reviewing the materials collected from Chesa, it became clear that the single participant of this study had minor inner conflict about her experiences with accelerated learning, but generally expressed positive benefits from the experience. While exceptionally bright and appreciative of the academic challenge in her pre-university schooling, Chesa was regretful of her choice to speed through her university years and felt that she could have spent more time enjoying the experiences and branching out into a variety of additional extracurricular and academic opportunities. However, that regret seems more hindsight than anything else, remained mainly about her decision not to study abroad and did not impact her in significant ways beyond her university years. (*Author's note: Chesa has since been to Japan on vacation. Twice.*)

This final chapter is organized into the following sections: 1) discussion of the study's research questions and current literature, 2) implications and suggestions for further research, 3) implications for policy and practice, and 4) an autobiographical reflection by the author.

Discussion

As I returned to the materials collected through interviews, additional correspondence, and my own knowledge of the community in which Chesa lived, I attempted to make meaning, while remembering the uncertainty of postmodernism and presenting Chesa's life through my interpretations of her lived experiences. This chapter is focused on discussion about the themes that presented themselves to me through interpretation. The themes that came from analyzing my interactions with Chesa and her family using the idea of interconnected rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) are significant enough to justify each as a major finding within the study. Her

responses also demonstrated answers to the research questions. Because of the emphasis on family duty, it became apparent that family support was critical to Chesa's success and played a role in her desire to participate in such a program. These are her roots, metaphorically and rhizomatically. Her high academic ability caused awkward social interactions, which then fostered further determination to be academically successful, repeating the cycle throughout her schooling. Her participation in accelerated programming and extreme focus on a specific end goal (like graduation from college) allowed her to feel prepared for higher education, conversely, it also limited the options she chose and did not participate in some experiences she would have really enjoyed (like studying abroad or having a language minor). All of these concepts influenced the others, demonstrating the deep, interconnected, root systems this tree of research contains (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

I sought to understand how accelerated secondary schools impacted their graduates after completing post-secondary schooling. Current research focusing on the story of college graduates who have gone through accelerated learning has not been found; in fact, most research found focusing on stories of participants were either studies using multiple students currently attending a high school program, or research that usually sought to review the impact of that program on matriculation or readiness. The purpose of this study was to understand how college graduates perceive their experiences in secondary accelerated learning programs and the impact of that participation on their continued education. Seeking only understanding, I did not assign value to, or rate, a specific program type. Instead, I sought to address three interconnected research questions. Below, I discuss my answers and their relation to the current literature in turn.

1. What are college graduates' perceptions and understandings of their experiences in secondary accelerated programs?

Generally, college graduates are not consulted when discussing accelerated secondary programs. Rather, they are reduced to matriculation numbers, graduation rates, and degree obtainment percentages (Barnett et al, 2013; Berger et al, 2010, 2014; Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). The attempts of the Gates Foundation to monitor the impact of Early College High Schools remain limited to general details about groups and focus mainly on comparative research, though one case study found that students who attend Early Colleges are “students who are motivated, driven, and self-disciplined, and students who can accept large amounts of homework and pressure” (Reed, 2017, p. 183). Additional research shows that ECHSs are “particularly promising for females and students from homes where English is not the primary language; these students reported feeling more engaged in their coursework and possessed higher GPAs in high school classes than other groups of students” (Berger et al, 2010, p. xi). Consensus within current literature about Early Colleges high schools shows that “After leaving high school, Early College students were more likely than comparison students to have earned a college degree” (Berger & Hoshen, 2014, p. 21). In addition to the fact that students attending accelerated programs are more likely to have higher college GPAs and credit attainment (Allan & Dadger, 2013), students find these small accelerated schools supportive and family-like while they encourage responsibility and respect (Cravey, 2013; Edmunds et al., 2013).

The empirical materials collected in this study clearly support all of the current literature findings. A high GPA, incredibly motivated, able to complete massive amounts of work and accept significant pressure...high school Chesa was seemingly a poster-child for accelerated learning programs. Obtaining her college degree within four years after graduating from high

school, the perception she associated with accelerated programs was that of a rigorous education, as well as believing it would be good preparation for post-secondary schooling and proving her value and worth. Her understandings of such programs at the time of her grade eleven enrollment in a concurrent enrollment program were focused on attending a school where her few friends were, while her understandings of the program as a college graduate were that the experience benefited her organization and awareness of college-style courses and scheduling.

Though the social struggles to fit in that Chesa cited as occurring throughout her time in high school are not strongly reflected in current literature, it is logical to presume that most adolescents talking to a researcher about their high school experiences while in high school are not as likely to either 1) admit to and discuss their social struggles and/or 2) actually understand the affect these struggles may have on them while they are living them in the moment.

In general, Chesa's perceptions and understandings are similar to other published studies, though the individual participant allows for more detail and nuance.

2. *In what ways do college graduates perceive value from their experiences in secondary accelerated learning programs?*

The value placed on secondary acceleration is often monetary and tied to finances for college tuition or how students can speed through college coursework. As stated in Chapter One: college has "[become] less affordable over the last 20 years" (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016, p. 2), which has made concurrent enrollment an attractive option for low income students. Also stated in Chapter One is the notion that there is not a matching level of degree obtainment to go with the widespread numbers of students taking concurrent enrollment options. The studies that discuss student-assigned value on their accelerated learning experience typically reflect a

family-like atmosphere (Cravey, 2013) and the supportive relationships students build in small concurrent enrollment schools (Edmunds et al., 2013).

In this study, Chesa's experiences participating in accelerated coursework meant she felt more successful and prepared academically (Table 3) when she moved on to university level work. During her high school years, she also placed high value on the social status she believed came from attending a school in "an environment that challenged me more than my previous schools." Successfully participating in an accelerated learning program influenced her confidence. While she assigned high value to the academic preparation she gained from her Early College high school, also impactful during that time was the support of her family and her feelings of social awkwardness. These outside factors of family and social connections were critical to Chesa's participation and feelings of belonging and ability.

3. *In what ways did participation in a secondary accelerated learning program impact the college experiences of college graduates?*

Many college students who participated in some form of acceleration, either condensing their amount of time through high school or taking less time in college, say that they felt more comfortable on the college campus (Cravey, 2013, Edmunds et al., 2017; Noble, 1998) and that they were socially and academically ready for college (Knudsen & Hoshen, 2014; Cravey, 2013; Godfrey et al., 2014; Haxton et al, 2016). While there are concerns that being a younger chronological age or other results of accelerated programming may cause ostracization or difficulties, these are generally unfounded (Robinson, 2004). The impact of secondary acceleration is usually seen in student completion of college course credits in a shorter amount of time than their peers, and the comfort with the academic structures of college life.

Chesa's college experience was impacted in the same way as the existing research; she was able to complete her university coursework within four years in a program that takes many students five. She had enough units completed in general education completed that she did not need to take the lower level coursework required of entering students. Additionally, experiencing college courses and their schedule and structure prior to entering university life caused her to feel that she was "able to pay attention a lot more" in the 90-minute university classes than her peers, because she had been participating in them for two years already. She also felt at home within the academic setting, as she considered university work and students to be a "continuation of being surrounded by really smart people who work hard."

In this area, students who remained within accelerated programming and did not drop out, as well as continued on to a 4-year university immediately upon high school graduation seemed to share similar comfortability across researcher geography, methods, and research questions.

Recommendations for Further Research

Through this dissertation, we have looked at secondary acceleration, the historical and current reasons for its increase, the story of the impact of a specific accelerated program on a single participant, and the possible implications of that story on the greater educational landscape. While there were no problems that compromised or changed the structure of the study as it was intended, there were details that arose during the collection of empirical materials that caused me to reflect on this particular participant's background and think about possible future studies in this area. While by this point in your reading, it should be clear that because of the inherent difference between human beliefs, values, and experiences it would be impossible for another researcher to simply add on to the current findings, the following suggestions for how

to continue building on this topic are broken into 1) reflections on the current study, 2) recommendations for adding to the current study design based on my beliefs about what may develop Chesa's story more deeply, while building the significance of the study to appeal to a broader audience, and 3) research questions for possible future studies.

Current Study

While the focus of this chapter is the impact identified through the story of one participant in a secondary accelerated learning program, it is important to point out additional factors likely also influenced Chesa's story and acknowledge that they, while not the focus of this study, are important for future studies. Chesa's background as an immigrant and first-generation naturalized citizen in the United States plays a major role in her drive and the encouragement of her father. The culture of the Philippines and the role it played her family's values and beliefs, while not directly referenced as important by Chesa, was very important to her father. Specifically referenced was his desire to help close the poverty loop in his family, and his belief that education is the way to do this. This cultural and socioeconomic impact, as well as the difficulties immigrants may have integrating into higher educational institutions, was not a factor in this study, but emerged as a clear point of interest for future research. Not because she is an immigrant, but because the potential impact from her father's background and belief structure as an immigrant appeared to have played a large role in not only her accelerated learning experiences that started at a young age, but also in the financial implications of attending a concurrent enrollment school. While it stands to reason that any single income family with three children all reaching high school and college age within a four-year span would be attracted to such financial supports as a concurrent enrollment program, it is unclear as to whether having an immigrant background played a role in Chesa's drive and motivation for a

university education. Nowhere in our interactions did she ever mention money as a driving force for attending an accelerated secondary program; her motivation seemed to be attending a school where everyone was smart and high achieving. Though finances did not seem the main factor, it was clear Chesa was aware of her family's precarious financial background. Something I did not find in current research around this topic is information about whether program graduate's country of birth was a factor in their choice of an accelerated program, though some do cite parental background (Cravey, 2013). It is also difficult to know if country of origin may have influenced student decisions to participate in such a program. I chose not to focus on this aspect as I feel that would have made for a different study all together, but I do believe it is deserving of additional research through a lens that may be more targeted towards students who have immigrated, particularly Critical Race Theory or a theory around immigrant adaptation.

The next point that caused reflection was the participant's age. Doing this type of study after the participant graduated from high school *and* college was an important aspect to generating these findings; it would be rare for a high school student to be able to answer these questions with enough hindsight; more time beyond high school and additional college experiences encouraged reflection and a sense of self that many 18-year-olds are still attempting to find. Many 30-year-olds are also still attempting to find the same sense of self Chesa exudes, but parameters needed to be put in place somewhere. The biographical nature of the study would have been enhanced by high school peer interviews, teacher interviews, and long-term tracking of the participant. Being able to monitor 8-year-old Chesa, 18-year-old Chesa, and 28-year-old Chesa would have been a fascinating look into the impacts of acceleration, both on children while it is happening and the effects on adults once they are removed from schooling. This would have required a much longer term of study, as well as additional consent requirements to

use a minor student in the study. It would also be difficult to know without doubt that an 8-year-old was going to attend an accelerated learning program in secondary school.

In order to make this study even more reflective of Chesa's life experience, it would benefit from being able to compare her to like students. This could be accomplished by adding a quantitative section to this study. I would collect and analyze matriculation statistics from four-year college graduates like Chesa who was concurrently enrolled for only two years and took college coursework during grades eleven and twelve. I would also collect and analyze matriculation data from four-year college graduates who attended such a program for four years and took college coursework during grades nine through twelve. Additional data from students about their demographics, the number of credits achieved during high school, the length of time it took to complete college, responses to questions about how highly students valued their concurrent enrollment experience during high school, and responses to questions about how highly students valued their concurrent enrollment experience during college and beyond would be necessary.

Additionally, as conversations with Chesa continued to take place, the "gifted" nature of her academic ability shone through. Completing an identical study with a participant who is less academically talented would serve as an interesting research counterpoint to widen the body of knowledge; as many accelerated programs claim to support underserved populations, choosing a participant who is a member of the same populations as Chesa (female-identifying, first generation college student, immigrant) but without the level of ease and ability around academics would yield important additional findings about graduate perceptions. While there exists research pertaining to accelerating gifting students, much of it focuses on the gifted nature of the students

rather than the college preparation, awareness, and programs that are represented in this study (Pollins, 1983; Robinson, 2004; Tookey, 1999).

By collecting and comparing such data points, trends, if any, can be viewed and analyzed around the length of time spent concurrently enrolled and obtainment of college credits. This would allow for deeper analysis of Chesa's experiences in relation to other students who participated in similar programs. It would also allow for breakdowns by self-identified gender, socioeconomic status, while casting for wider responses and being able to provide context to Chesa's story. This would look at addressing the questions: is she truly an exceptional student? Is she simply one of many? Where does she fall within the broader landscape of similar students?

The major suggestion for continued study that comes from the program evaluation side of the existing studies remains a need to explore "whether long-term degree attainment and workforce outcomes are different between Early College and comparison students" (Knudsen & Hoshen, 2014, p. 22). As this was not a question of focus in this study, it remains something to further investigate. Further, in an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Heath (2008) recommended future research to "examine the impact of students who participate in dual enrollment programs, with the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree by the time they are 20 years old, and enter the work force earlier than their peers" (p. 79). Clearly, the longer-term impact of such program participation on society and the individual students is prioritized in the current literature. A follow-up study with Chesa, or a new study with a different participant, focuses on the entry of an accelerated study to the workforce and their experiences within it as a young employee may be the next step in this area.

Finally, the nature of time as related to schooling is a critical area of needed research. The most elusive of elements, time impacts all decisions made around education. When should students start school? When they reach five years old. When should students attend college? Immediately after high school graduation. Attempting to uncover the impact of chronology and the pride, blame or guilt that it causes, often associated with being moved up or held back a grade, taking a gap year, dropping out of high school, finishing through non-traditional means, or spending more than the expected two years at community college, is an almost impossible challenge. The notion that every human will perform all academic expectations, requirements, or goals in exactly the same timeframe is ridiculous. Why, then, did Chesa feel like “one of the good ones” when she completed college in four years? It is this societal construct and belief about going through school faster as being better that needs more study.

Future Studies

Accelerated programming makes significant impacts on those who participate in it, and the next step in the journey to understanding is to look at the bigger societal influences that are causing acceleration to increase in prevalence across the United States. Citizenship status, cost and financial need, as well as marketing of college preparatory programs are all societal influences on college obtainment, looking more specifically at their relationship to accelerated learning will allow for a clearer understanding of why families are drawn to such programs.

Thus, I recommend future studies consider the following research questions:

1. In what ways does the immigration status or nation of origin of a student in an accelerated secondary program influence their perceived value of their schooling experience?
2. In what ways do the demographics of college graduates who completed secondary concurrent enrollment programs differ from non-college graduates who completed secondary concurrent enrollment programs?

3. In what ways do societal and educational beliefs impact student, teacher, and parent perception about how long should be spent in college?

Of these questions, numbers one and two lend themselves to both quantitative or qualitative analysis, and while my personal leanings are always towards qualitative research, a straightforward statistical analysis with a large pool of respondents for question number two would yield the most helpful data as a starting point for a broader study. Question one would be an interesting case study or ethnography, especially if framed within an appropriate theory.

Question three, the most complex and, perhaps, impossible to analyze, is truly at the crux of the topic. Why is education in the United States promoting completion of college at earlier ages? Why has the reason to do so seemingly switched from encouraging high-achieving males to be challenged during their educational journey to a societal sense that the less time it takes students to complete school makes them, as Chesa said, “winners”? And why do stakeholders (students, parents, and teachers) seem to perceive that this is a good thing? While a large-scale study of this topic would be interesting, beginning with a case study or a narrative would allow for an entrée into the topic and allow a researcher to decide what is needed for further development.

Implications for Policy and Practice

For educational stakeholders, Chesa’s story brings to light reminders and recommendations for curricular expectations, and her experiences 1) reinforce the critical importance for students of having a support system, and create one for those students who may not have one at home; 2) emphasize the need for secondary schools of all types to educate college-bound students the importance of understanding the system of scheduling, planning, and organizing college courses and graduation requirements; and 3) remove time and age markers from educational attainment. Adding Chesa’s story to the body of knowledge around accelerated

secondary programs is adding another voice and another viewpoint to a less than saturated area of research and is critical to further understanding, though it is possible there are researchers who will take issue with the potentially limiting nature of a single participant in a qualitative study. Many of these may be the same researchers who take issue with qualitative research generally, particularly the postmodernist beliefs of individual truths being subjective. I remind naysayers again of a core value of interpretive biographies, and storytelling in general: “there is no truth in the painting of life, only multiple images and traces of what has been, what could have been, and what now is” (Denzin, 1989, p. 81) and would ask anyone who takes exception to this study to explain: why then are any studies considered valid?

Support Systems

Most will not contest the influence a family can have on a student’s perceived success or failure in school, as well as the importance of a social network on the school campus. What is often lost, however, is the explicit instruction in how to create social networks, and the usually non-systematized nature of providing students who may not have family supports some sort of structure while at school. Schools cannot be all things to all people, but it is clear that at the secondary level supports that increase student social capital and confidence like access to mentors, field trips, and information about college are critical to post-secondary success and matriculation. Unfortunately, all too often these are not provided to all students of every background equitably.

One of the reason schools like the Early Colleges are successful is because they provide small environments where students feel seen and heard, and when students – as with most humans – feel seen and heard they feel supported. Secondary school size is something that should be reviewed by school districts to determine if they can better support students by

creating multiple small secondary schools to replace large schools. This would better help support student needs, and those who would argue that it is financially irresponsible to run two small schools instead of one should review the data around increased attendance and student retention. Not only would it support students who either do not have any family at home, or have family who do not understand the college and educational process, it would also allow students who have difficulty socializing to feel slightly less overwhelmed because there are fewer people. Simultaneously, running a buddy program and providing mentors to support students at any grade level would further help all students feel seen, valued, and supported in planning for their future.

College Planning

While students are attending their newly resized high schools, they should also have access to college planning curriculum, regardless of secondary school program type. The notion that teaching students how to organize a schedule and plan for graduation is not new and already takes place in many college preparatory programs, especially in grade twelve. However, widespread teaching of schedule choices, reading a course catalog, and planning for graduation is not something all high school students currently do. Starting somewhere between grades seven and nine, schools should allow students to complete scheduling for themselves in the same way they would in college: creating a class schedule and registering for those classes online. If a class is full, they have to find another and adjust their schedule. While this would require system changes and take power away from school counselors and administrators to place students in classes, it would help empower students and allow them more choice and possibly encourage students to take more challenging courses than they may otherwise have been assigned.

Remove Time Markers

A final policy change to be made is to take age out of when schooling happens, thus creating a structure that allows students to attend school as soon as they are able to perform at a certain level. Allow students to progress through content at their own pace, with or without changing classrooms and teachers. Allow students to demonstrate mastery on a topic and then move on, rather than keeping them in a grade level because of their age. Take away acceleration, because everyone is simply working at their own pace. Faster isn't better – knowledge and mastery are better.

Clearly, this requires sweeping educational reform. Clearly, this is not something all people would support. Clearly, this would require support beyond individual schools; the smallest unit that could achieve this is a single school district. Clearly, this is a challenge to the decades old institution of school.

Minimally, administrators would have to reschedule courses, staffing, and student “grade levels.” Teachers would have to toss out outdated notions of “grading” and “scoring” students (many of which reward only compliance, and not true learning). Parents would have to use different markers than traditional A-F grades to reward or punish their children. But – and this is a big “but” – students would thrive. Less stress. Fewer punitive grading policies and politics. Increased joy in learning.

If we combined this change with the increase in social supports mentioned in the previous section, we would change schools in to a place of growth, learning, and increased humanity.

Autobiographical Reflection

For any researcher, the dissertation process is an eye-opening experience. Shedding new light on an old problem or providing never before seen empirical materials and their analysis is

an understandably heady process, filled with at least some hubris. Discovering myself as a postmodernist researcher throughout this process and this topic has only served to remove some of that hubris, slapping me in the face with how few Truths there are in the world, and how subjective our systems of education are. What I didn't expect was how connected I would feel to Chesa, despite our incredibly different backgrounds.

For example: the irony is not lost on me that I while I wrote this dissertation, I was worried about how long it was taking. The need for acceleration is strong and possibly (if not probably) societally conditioned. I had to work to remove my surface reaction of agreement when Chesa said things about completing school in four years making her more of a "winner." For Chesa (and myself, it seems), acceleration and early completion are the hallmark of success. While this study did not dig into that societal conditioning, I strongly believe that it is the next step taken to save education and making schooling and learning more aligned.

What I came out of this study realizing is that educational stakeholders do not ask themselves enough about why there is such a strong chronology to learning. Why does the grade level students are in is typically relate to age, rather than ability? Why is acceleration seen as something to be proud of, while starting late is considered something of which to be ashamed? Are they not both sides to the same coin, acknowledging that students are not developing like widgets at exactly the same times? Why is holding students back a grade level because of their marks on a report card socially acceptable when they are in high school, but not something we typically do in elementary school?

In Chapter One, I stated that "accelerated learning programs enable students to move through their schooling faster, but it is still unclear if there is any long-term impact of such acceleration on students and/or on society" (p. 14). At this point in the study, I feel confident in

stating that 1) there are differing long-term impacts on individual students, and that 2) there is a huge societal stigma around going slower through school than expected, but acceleration is valued.

I would argue that this particular issue comes down to the idea of how chronological age physically changes students and how closely connected our senses of propriety and morality are to decisions we have made for systems like schooling. No one wants to have a 9-year-old in a kindergarten class with five-year-olds, but no one would blink about a 16-year-old sitting in a group with 14-year-olds after being held back for two years. Why? It appears that it is more about social stigma and physical maturity than brain development and what is best for the 9-year-old. Removing time makers and allowing all students to mix and mingle could help remove ostracization of that five-year-old, but the morality and nature of United States society will make that difficult for many to support.

Society has created labels and judgements for students based on the time it takes for them to meet whatever bureaucracy-created standards are being implemented at their school. What American society hasn't done is refine an antiquated system of educating young people to embrace the diversity of time needed. It is this that needs to be the next step, so that future Chesas are not sitting in classes bored, while they are also not feeling like they can't take a semester to study abroad. So that there is no guilt around how long it takes to finish this doctorate. So that students are not made to feel as less-than because they are taking a different amount of time – more or less – than others.

Study Summary

Students who have participated in a secondary accelerated program generally state that their experiences are beneficial, in at least one way, but more often in multiple ways. Depending

on when in the students' academic journeys the studies have been completed, the research often focuses on students who are currently enrolled in these secondary programs. This interpretive biography also found that after college graduation, the effect of secondary acceleration is perceived in a beneficial and supportive mindset on the main participant. While the issues of support systems, college planning and preparation, and the removal of time markers in education are all important to be reviewed in future research, this topic is still important for additional research. By honing the topic even more, the importance of acceleration, as well as these recommendations on policy creation and curriculum review, remain critical as we enter a new decade of education.

REFERENCES

- Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Allen, D. (2010). *Dual enrollment: A comprehensive literature review & bibliography*. New York: CUNY Collaborative Programs Research & Evaluation.
- Allen, D., & Dadgar, M. (2012). Does dual enrollment increase students' success in college? Evidence from a quasi-experimental analysis of dual enrollment in New York City. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2012(158), 11-19.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage. 3rd Ed.
- American Institutes of Research and SRI International. 2009. *Six Years and Counting: The ECHSI Matures*. Fifth Annual Early College High School Initiative Evaluation Synthesis Report. Washington, DC: American Institutes of Research.
- An, B. P. (2013). The influence of dual enrollment on academic performance and college readiness: Differences by socioeconomic status. *Research in Higher Education*, 54(4), 407-432.
- Andrews, H. A. (2004). Dual credit research outcomes for students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28(5), 415-422.
- Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H. A. (1991). *Postmodern education: politics, culture, and social criticism*.
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Bailey, T., & Karp, M. M. (2003). *Promoting College Access and Success: A Review of Credit-Based Transition Programs*. New York: Columbia University.
- Boazman, J., & Sayler, M. (2011). Personal well-being of gifted students following participation in an early college-entrance program. *Roeper Review*, 33(2), 76-85.
- Benbow, C.P., & Stanley, J. C. (1996). Inequity in equity: How “equity” can lead to inequity for high-potential students. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 2(2), 249.
- Berger, A., Adelman, N., & Cole, S. (2010). The early college high school initiative: An overview of five evaluation years. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(3), 333-347.
- Berliner, D. C., & Biddle, B. J. (1996). The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public schools. *NASSP Bulletin*, 80(576), 119-121.
- Bernstein, L., Yamaguchi, R., Unlu, F., Edmunds, J., Glennie, E., Willse, J., ... & Dallas, A. (2010). Early Findings from the Implementation and Impact Study of Early College High School. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*. Conference Abstract.
- Bielick, S. (2008). *1.5 million homeschooled students in the United States in 2007*. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Boland, H. G. (1995). Postmodernism and higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 66(5), 521-559.
- Bleske-Rechek, A., Lubinski, D., & Benbow, C. P. (2004). Meeting the educational needs of special populations: Advanced placement's role in developing exceptional human capital. *Psychological Science*, 15(4), 217-224.
- Boardman, C. W. (1943). Findings from selected studies on early admission to college. *The School Review*, 51(8), 460-470.

- Born, T. (2006). Middle and early college high schools: Providing multilevel support and accelerated learning. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2006(135), 49-58.
- Bozick, R., Lauff, E., & Wirt, J. (2007). Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002): A First Look at the Initial Postsecondary Experiences of the High School Sophomore Class of 2002. *National Center for Education Statistics*.
- Bracey, G. W. (2008). Disastrous legacy: Aftermath of a nation at risk. *Dissent*, 55(4), 80-83.
- Bruce, L. M. (2007). Perceptions, motivations, and achievement of African American students enrolled in a middle college high school. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Calhoun, Y., Rangel, V. S., & Coulson, H. L. (2017). *Educational Resilience: How students navigate the challenges of attending an early college high school*. [Paper Presentation]. University Council for Educational Administration, Denver, CO.
- Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Cheah, B. (2011). *The college payoff: Education, occupations, lifetime earnings*. Washington, DC: Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown university.
- Cheeseman Day, J., & Newburger, E. C. (2002). The big payoff: Educational attainment and synthetic estimates of work-life earnings. Current population reports, special studies. Retrieved October 20, 2013
- Colangelo, N., Assouline, S. G., Marron, M. A., Castellano, J. A., Clinkenbeard, P. R., Rogers, K., ... & Smith, D. (2010). Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy. National Work Group on Acceleration. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 21(2), 180-203.
- College Board. (2014a). The 10th annual AP report to the nation. New York, NY: Author.

College Board. (2014b). English language and composition course description. New York, NY:

Author.

Combs, J. P., & Sáenz, K. P. (2016). Experiences, Perceived Challenges, and Support Systems of Early College High School Students. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 5(1), 324.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. (5th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.

Cravey, I. (2013). It's different here! the early college: A new secondary school culture. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 37(9), 691-703.

Cunningham, C. L., & Wagonlander, C. S. (2000). Establishing and sustaining a middle college high school. *New directions for community colleges*, 2000(111), 41-51.

Dare, L., & Nowicki, E. (2015). Conceptualizing concurrent enrollment: Why high-achieving students go for it. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 59(4), 249-264.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1988). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive biography* (Vol. 17). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (2013). The death of data?. *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies*, 13(4), 353-356.

- Derrida, J. (1997). *Of Grammatology*. (G.C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original Work published 1967)
- Desforges, C., & Abouchar, A. (2003). The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review (Vol. 433). London: DfES.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Edmunds, J. A. (2012). Early colleges: A new model of schooling focusing on college readiness. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2012(158), 81-89.
- Edmunds, J.A., Willse, J., Arshavsky, N., & Dallas, A. (2013). Mandated engagement: The impact of early college high schools. *Teachers College Record*, 115(7), 1-31.
- Edmunds, J. A., Unlu, F., Glennie, E., Bernstein, L., Fesler, L., Furey, J., & Arshavsky, N. (2017). Smoothing the transition to postsecondary education: The impact of the early college model. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 10(2), 297-325.
- Ennis, R. H. (1993). Critical thinking assessment. *Theory into practice*, 32(3), 179-186.
- Fink, J., Jenkins, D., & Yanagiura, T. (2017). What Happens to Students Who Take Community College" Dual Enrollment" Courses in High School?. *Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University*.
- Flemming, A. S. (1960). The philosophy and objectives of the National Defense Education Act. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 327(1), 132-138.
- Gabbard, D., & Atkinson, T. (2007). Stossel in America: A case study of the neoliberal/neoconservative assault on public schools and teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(2), 85-109.

- Gardner, D. P. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education. The Commission.*
- Garet, M., Knudson, J., & Hoshen, G. (2014). Early college, continued success: Early college high school initiative impact study. *American Institutes for Research.*
- Gelberg, D. (2007). The business agenda for school reform: A parallel universe. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(2), 45-58.
- Giani, M., Alexander, C., & Reyes, P. (2014). Exploring variation in the impact of dual-credit coursework on postsecondary outcomes: A quasi-experimental analysis of Texas students. *The High School Journal*, 97(4), 200-218.
- Godfrey, K., Matos-Elefonte, H., Ewing, M., & Patel, P. (2014). College Completion: Comparing AP®, Dual-Enrolled, and Nonadvanced Students. Research Report 2014-3. *College Board.*
- Gross, M. U. (2004). Radical acceleration. *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students.* (87-96).
- Guilbault, G. A. (2013). Effects of early college programs on community college retention and graduation rates. Unpublished dissertation.
- Hassard, J. (1994). Postmodern organizational analysis: Toward a conceptual framework. *Journal of Management Studies Oxford*. 31, 303-303.
- Haxton, C., Song, M., Zeiser, K., Berger, A., Turk-Bicakci, L., Garet, M. S., Knudsen, J. & Hoshen, G. (2016). Longitudinal findings from the early college high school initiative impact study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(2), 410-430.

- Heath, L. A. (2008). Community college and university experiences of high school dual enrollment students (Doctoral dissertation, Florida Atlantic University).
- Hess, F. M. (Ed.). (2005). *With the best of intentions: How philanthropy is reshaping K-12 education*. Cambridge: MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Hoffman, N., Vargas, J., & Santos, J. (2009). New directions for dual enrollment: Creating stronger pathways from high school through college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2009(145), 43-58.
- Hoffman, N., & Webb, M. (2010). From hope to belief. *Educational Leadership*, 67(7), 54-58.
- Howley, A., Howley, M. D., Howley, C. B., & Duncan, T. (2013). Early college and dual enrollment challenges: Inroads and impediments to access. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 24(2), 77-107.
- Isaac, S., & Michael, W. B. (1995). Handbook in research and evaluation: A collection of principles, methods, and strategies useful in the planning, design, and evaluation of studies in education and the behavioral sciences. Edits publishers.
- Jolly, J. L. (2009). A resuscitation of gifted education. *American Educational History Journal*, 36(1), 37-52.
- Kane, C. M. (1994). *Prisoners of Time: Research. What We Know and What We Need To Know*. US Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328.
- Kaniuka, T. S., & Vickers, M. (2010). Lessons learned: How early college high schools offer a pathway for high school reform. *NASSP Bulletin*, 94(3), 165-183.

- Karp, M. M., Calcagno, J. C., Hughes, K. L., Jeong, D. W., & Bailey, T. R. (2007). *The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An Analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States*. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.
- Karp, M. M., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). Study: Dual enrollment can benefit a broad range of students. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers (JI)*, 83(7), 14-17.
- Khazem, J. H., & Khazem, H. A. (2014). The role of accelerated learning in the school choice debate. *International Journal of Education Research*, 9(1).
- Kinnick, K. N. (2012). The impact of dual enrollment on the institution. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2012(158), 39-47.
- Kisker, C. B. (2006). Integrating high school and the community college: Previous efforts and current possibilities. *Community College Review*, 34(1), 68-86.
- Kleiner, B., & Lewis, L. (2005). Dual enrollment of high school students at postsecondary institutions: 2002-TAB. NCES 2005-008. *National Center for Education Statistics*.
- Koos, L. V. (1925a). Overlapping in High School and College. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 11(5), 322-336.
- Koos, L. V. (1925b). *The junior college movement*. Boston, MA: Ginn & Company.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy within/in the postmodern*. Routledge.
- Leistyna, P. (2007). Corporate testing: Standards, profits, and the demise of the public sphere. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(2), 59-84.
- Levin, H. M. (1989). Accelerated schools: A new strategy for at-risk students. *Policy Bulletin*.
- Lichten, W. (2000). Whither advanced placement?. *Education policy analysis archives*. 8, 29.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). Los Angeles: CA, Sage.

- Lubienski, C. A., & Weitzel, P. C. (2010). *The Charter School Experiment: Expectations, Evidence, and Implications*. Boston, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Lubinski, D. (2004). Long-term effects of educational acceleration. *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students*, 23-38.
- Lubinski, D., Webb, R. M., Morelock, M. J., & Benbow, C. P. (2001). Top 1 in 10,000: a 10-year follow-up of the profoundly gifted. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(4), 718.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*.
- Manna, P. (2002). Federalism, Agenda Setting, and the Dynamics of Federal Education Policy. [Presentation]. *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*. Boston, MA.
- Marken, S., Gray, L., & Lewis, L. (2013). *Dual Enrollment Programs and Courses for High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2010-11 First Look*. NCES 2013-002. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Martin, T. C. (2013). Cognitive and noncognitive college readiness of participants in three concurrent-enrollment programs. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 37(9), 704-718.
- McDonald, D., & Farrell, T. (2012). Out of the mouths of babes: Early college high school students' transformational learning experiences. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 23(3), 217-248.
- Means, A. J. (2013). *Schooling in the age of austerity: Urban education and the struggle for democratic life*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M. Y., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001).

Power and positionality: Negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures.

International Journal of Lifelong Education, 20(5), 405-416.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). Qualitative research: A guide to design and

implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

Mitchell, M., & Leachman, M. (2015). Years of cuts threaten to put college out of reach for more

students. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 13.

Molnar, A., & Garcia, D. R. (2007). The expanding role of privatization in education:

Implications for teacher education and development. *Teacher Education*

Quarterly, 34(2), 11-24.

Morgan, T. T. (2015). *The road less traveled: Alumni perceptions of the Georgia Early College*

High School experience (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Georgia Southern

University, Georgia.

National Education Association of the United States. Committee on Secondary School Studies,

& Eliot, C. W. (1894). *Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies:*

With the Reports of the Conferences Arranged by the Committee. American Book

Company.

Noble, K. D., Arndt, T., Nicholson, T., Sletten, T., & Zamora, A. (1998). Different strokes:

Perceptions of social and emotional development among early college entrants. *Journal*

of Secondary Gifted Education, 10(2), 77.

North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. (1915). *Proceedings of the*

twentieth annual meeting of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary

Schools. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

- Ongaga, K. O. (2010). Students' learning experiences in an early college high school. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 85(3), 375-388.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Los Angeles: CA, Sage.
- Paul, R. (1989). Critical Thinking Handbook: High School. *A Guide for Redesigning Instruction*. Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.
- Pollins, L. D. (1983). The effects of acceleration on the social and emotional development of gifted students. *Academic precocity: Aspects of its development*, 160-178.
- Pressey, S. L. (1944). Acceleration and the college student. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 231(1), 34-41.
- Pressey, S. L. (1949). *Educational acceleration: Appraisals and basic problems* (No. 31). Ohio State University.
- Prophete, K. S. (2013). How race, gender, and Pell status affect the persistence and degree attainment rates of dual enrollment students. Florida Atlantic University.
- Reed, S. D. (2017). A Case Study: Student Evaluations of an Early College Support System-A Quality Improvement Initiative (Doctoral dissertation, Ferris State University).
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Robinson, N. M. (2004). Effects of academic acceleration on the social-emotional status of gifted students. *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students*, 59-67.
- Rogers, K. B. (2007). Lessons learned about educating the gifted and talented: A synthesis of the research on educational practice. *Gifted child quarterly*, 51(4), 382-396.

- Rosenau, P. M. (1992). *Post-modernism and the social sciences: Insights, inroads, and intrusions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rothschild, E. (1999). Four decades of the advanced placement program. *History Teacher*, 32(2), 175-206.
- Saltman, K. J. (2014). *The politics of education: A critical introduction*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Slattery, P. (1995). A postmodern vision of time and learning: A response to the National Education Commission Report Prisoners of Time. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(4), 612-634.
- Slattery, P. (2000). Postmodernism as a challenge to dominant representations. *Paradigm debates in curriculum and supervision: Modern and postmodern perspectives*, 132.
- Snyder, T. D., & Dillow, S. A. (2016). *Digest of education statistics 2015*. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Southern, W. T., & Jones, E. D. (2004). Types of acceleration: Dimensions and issues. *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students*, 2, 5-12.
- Speroni, C. (2011a). *Determinants of students' success: The role of Advanced Placement and dual enrollment programs*. New York, NY: National Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Speroni, C. (2011b). High school dual enrollment programs: Are we fast-tracking students too fast? New York, NY: National Center for Postsecondary Research.
- St. Pierre, E. A., & Jackson, A. Y. (2014). Qualitative data analysis after coding.
- Taylor, J. L. (2015). Accelerating pathways to college: The (in) equitable effects of community college dual credit. *Community College Review*, 43(4), 355-379.

- Taylor, W. H., Harbison, E. H., Blackmer, A. R., Bragdon, H. W., Bundy, M., Seymour, Jr.(Charles), & Exeter Members of the Faculties of Andover (Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton and Yale). (1952). *General education in school and college: A committee report*. Harvard University Press.
- Tempelaar, D. T. (2006). The role of metacognition in business education. *Industry and Higher Education*, 20(5), 291-297.
- Tobolowsky, B. F., & Allen, T. O. (2016). On the Fast Track: Understanding the Opportunities and Challenges of Dual Credit. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 42(3), 7–106.
- Tompkins, E., & Gaumnitz, W. H. (1954). The Carnegie Unit: Its Origin, Status, and Trends. Bulletin, 1954, No. 7. *Office of Education, US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*.
- Tookey, M. E. (1999). The International Baccalaureate: A program conducive to the continued growth of the gifted adolescent. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 11(2), 52-66.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. (2013). U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Vol. I, Part 1; J.K. Folger and C.B. Nam, Education of the American Population (1960 Census Monograph); Current Population Reports, Series P-20, various years; March 1970 through March 2013.
- U.S. National Education Commission on Time, & Learning. (1994). *Prisoners of time: schools and programs making time work for students and teachers: report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning*.
- University of California (1908). Biennial report of the President of the University on behalf of the Board of Regents to his excellency the Governor of the state. Sacramento: James J. Ayers, Supt., state printing.

- Van Teijlingen, E. R., & Hundley, V. (2001). The importance of pilot studies. *The University of Surry Social Research Update*, 35.
- Waits, T., Setzer, J. C. & Lewis, L. (2005). Dual credit and exam-based courses in U.S. public high schools: 2002–03 (NCES Report No. 2005–009). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Webb, M., & Mayka, L. (2011). Unconventional Wisdom: A Profile of the Graduates of Early College High School. *Jobs for the Future*.
- Weil, D. K. (Ed.). (2000). *Charter schools: A reference handbook*.
- Williams, M. (2014). Accelerated college preparation: Examining middle college high school alumni perception of their college readiness and transition to college (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).
- Woodcock, J. B., & Beal, H. K. O. (2013). Voices of early college high school graduates in Texas: A narrative study. *The High School Journal*, 97(1), 56-76.
- Zook, G. F. (1947). *Higher education for American democracy: A report* (Vol. 3). US Government Printing Office.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT (MAIN PARTICIPANT)

IS FASTER TRULY BETTER? AN EXPLORATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF A STUDENT IN A SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve understanding the experiences and perceptions of people who have gone through accelerated learning programs in high school, specifically dual enrollment.

My name is Rachel West, and I am a student at the University of the Pacific, Benerd School of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have participated in a dual enrollment high school program that allowed you to earn at least one semester of college credits at the time of your high school graduation, attended a four year university immediately following high school graduation, and you have graduated from college in the last four years.

The purpose of this research is to understand how college graduates perceive their experiences in secondary (high school) accelerated learning programs and the impact of that participation on their continued education. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to interview with me face to face at least once. Interviews will take place in a location of your choosing. Please note, that if you choose a public location, it is possible that you will be recognized and your confidentiality may be compromised. You will be asked to respond to follow up emails, phone calls, and respond to four journal prompts in writing. Your participation in this study will last no longer than three months. I will contact you no more than once per week during this time frame. I will also ask you to refer me to one-three adults who have been relevant to your educational journey and who would be willing to be interviewed. All interviews will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. The chart below shows the expected time commitment:

<i>Initial interview</i>	Not to exceed two hours
<i>Second interview</i>	Not to exceed one hour
<i>Number of follow up contacts</i>	Maximum of ten (No more than once per week for ten weeks.)
<i>Type of follow up contacts</i>	Recorded phone calls or emails
<i>Expected time for follow up contacts</i>	Maximum 30 minutes per week
<i>Additional data</i>	Four handwritten journal prompts (30 mins per entry)
<i>Total amount of time expected</i>	Maximum ten hours

There are some possible risks involved for participants. The main risk is that reliving high school and discussing the relationships you have formed related to education may cause temporary anxiety, stress, or sadness. You will experience a slight loss of confidentiality as the relevant

adults in your life will know that you are participating in this study. There are benefits to this research, particularly that educational stakeholders (i.e. policy makers, teachers, school administrators, etc.) will be able to use this experience to better understand the impact accelerated learning programs have on students who participate in them.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Thomas Nelson at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Research & Graduate Studies Office, University of the Pacific (209) 946-7716. In the event of a research-related injury, please contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier, then contact the Office of Research & Graduate Studies.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Measures to insure your confidentiality are: 1) all computer files will be password protected by the researcher, 2) you will be assigned a pseudonym and your true name will not be used on any documentation, and 3) any identifiers that will make it easy to determine who you are specifically will be removed (i.e. school name). The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT (RELEVANT ADULTS OF PARTICIPANT)

IS FASTER TRULY BETTER? AN EXPLORATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF A STUDENT IN A SECONDARY ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve understanding the experiences and perceptions of people who have gone through accelerated learning programs in high school, specifically dual enrollment.

My name is Rachel West, and I am a student at the University of the Pacific, Benerd School of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have been identified as a relevant adult to the participant in my biographical study (NAME OF PARTICIPANT). This means that you have influenced (NAME) in some way, and he/she recommended I speak to you.

The purpose of this research is to understand how college graduates perceive their experiences in secondary (high school) accelerated learning programs and the impact of that participation on their continued education. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to interview with me face to face at least once. Interviews will take place in a location of your choosing. Please note, that if you choose a public location, it is possible that you will be recognized and your confidentiality may be compromised. Your participation in this study will last no longer than three months. I will contact you no more three times during this time frame. All interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes.

There are some possible risks involved for participants. The main risk is that discussing your relationship with (NAME OF PARTICIPANT) high school and discussing the relationships you have formed related to education may cause temporary anxiety, stress, or sadness. The chart below also shows the time commitment you will need to make to this study:

<i>Initial interview</i>	Not to exceed one hour
<i>Second interview</i>	Not to exceed 30 minutes
<i>Number of follow up contacts</i>	Maximum of five
<i>Type of follow up contacts</i>	Emails
<i>Expected time for follow up contacts</i>	Maximum 30 minutes per contact
<i>Additional data</i>	None
<i>Total amount of time expected</i>	Maximum of 4 hours

There are benefits to this research, particularly that educational stakeholders (i.e. policy makers, teachers, school administrators, etc.) will be able to use this experience to better understand the impact accelerated learning programs have on students who participate in them.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Thomas Nelson at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Research & Graduate Studies Office,

University of the Pacific (209) 946-7716. In the event of a research-related injury, please contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier, then contact the Office of Research & Graduate Studies.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Measures to insure your confidentiality are: 1) all computer files will be password protected by the researcher, 2) you will be assigned a pseudonym and your true name will not be used on any documentation, and 3) any identifiers that will make it easy to determine who you are specifically will be removed (i.e. school name). Additionally, you can request (NAME) not be present for the interview if you do not want him/her to hear your responses. This consent form and any data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location (password protected if digital) and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C: MAIN PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Current Situation:

1. Tell me about your current employment status.
2. Tell me about your current living situation.
3. Tell me about your hobbies and outside activities.
4. Tell me anything you feel relevant for me to know about your current situation.

Academic History:

5. Have the participant create a history of educational experiences.
 - a. Start at kindergarten through current status
 - b. Discuss locations – city, school district, type of school
 - c. Discuss living situation during college – dorms, home, off-campus apartment
6. How have your educational experiences influenced you?
7. Describe how your dual enrollment high school selection and enrollment process.
8. Describe your experiences in a dual enrollment high school.
9. Describe your college selection and application process.
10. Describe your experiences in college.
11. Describe a time, if any, when you felt like giving up on your education.

Relationships Related to Education:

12. Have participant create a list of adults who were important in their educational journey.
13. Have participant discuss familial relationships during their educational journey.
14. Have participant discuss non-family relationships during their educational journey.
15. Have participant discuss the relationship with education that was encouraged in their household while growing up.

Educational Perceptions and Goals:

16. What were some, or all, of the reasons you chose to attend college?
17. What value, if any, do you believe an accelerated education has provided you?
18. What value, if any, do you believe a college education has provided you?
19. If you could change two things about your schooling experience, what would they be?
20. Describe a time in your education when you felt proud of an accomplishment.
21. Describe a time in your education when you were frustrated.

Tell me about something that is important to you that I forgot to ask about.

APPENDIX D: MAIN PARTICIPANT JOURNAL PROMPTS

Directions for journal responses:

Your responses to the following prompts do not need to be formal, spellchecked, or even grammatical. Do not worry about addressing every question within the prompt; they are written to jog your memory and get you thinking, not as point by point questions to address. Responses should be written in whatever form feels best for you: longhand, typed, poem, letter, essay, etc. are all perfectly appropriate. While I will be reading these, they will remain completely confidential and any reference to these prompts in my research study must be approved by you before anyone else can read them. These are for me to get to know you better.

Prompt #1: Describe your **high school** experiences. Were you happy? Unhappy? Popular? Shy? Nerdy? Did you get good grades? Bad grades? What were some of your frustrations and successes? What are some of your major accomplishments? What are some of your major regrets? What would you do over?

Prompt #2: Describe your **college** experiences. Were you happy? Unhappy? Popular? Shy? Nerdy? Did you get good grades? Bad grades? What were some of your frustrations and successes? What are some of your major accomplishments? What are some of your major regrets? What would you do over?

Prompt #3: Describe your home life while you were growing up. Was education important? Was homework time valued? Did you feel supported in your educational endeavors? Did people help you with homework? Did you have chores or jobs that you had to do outside of schoolwork?

Prompt #4: Discuss how your course acceleration in high school impacted your mindset/mentality during high school and college. What was it like being in your college classes and knowing you were younger/further ahead than most of your peers? Did you ever feel like you were rushing? Did being younger affect your extracurricular choices or out of class relationships?

APPENDIX E. RELEVANT ADULTS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Current Situation:

1. Tell me about your educational background.
2. Tell me anything you feel relevant for me to know about your current situation.

Relationship to Participant

3. Have the interviewee create a timeline of their relationship with the participant.
 - a. If family, relationship within family unit
 - b. If friends, timeline of meeting and becoming friends
4. Have the interviewee describe the relationship they have with the participant. (i.e. closeness, amount of contact, consistency of contact, etc).

Relationship to Participant's Education:

1. What value, if any, do you believe an accelerated education has provided the participant?
2. What value, if any, do you believe a college education has provided the participant?
3. What role did you play in the participant's education?

Perceptions about Accelerated Learning:

4. Now that you have witnessed someone go through an accelerated learning program, what do you think of accelerated learning in general?
5. Have the interviewee describe how they saw/interpreted the participant's experiences throughout his/her accelerated learning program.
6. Have the interviewee explain whether they would recommend accelerated learning to others and why.

Tell me about something that is important about your relationship to the participant that I forgot to ask about.

APPENDIX F: TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT – MAIN PARTICIPANT

“Hello, my name is Rachel West and I am doctoral student at the University of the Pacific. I was given your contact information by _____. He/she told me that you are a college graduate who participated in dual enrollment work in high school. Is that accurate?”

<If ask for clarification of dual enrollment work> “Dual enrollment in this case would mean taking at least three years of advanced work that allowed you to enter college with at least one semester of college credit. Does that apply to you?”

<If yes, continue. If no, terminate call.>

“I am working on my doctoral dissertation. I am hoping to use you as the participant in my research. I basically want to learn your experiences in high school college as they relate to dual enrollment. Is that something you would be interested in doing?”

<If yes, continue. If no, terminate call.>

“I will be asking you to participate in two audio recorded face to face interviews of no more than an hour and a half each. The study will end [date three months after initial call], and I may need to contact you periodically throughout that time via email or phone for clarification. Is that okay?”

<If yes, continue. If no, terminate call.>

“Great! Let’s work out a time and place for the first interview. I will bring a consent form and we can go over more details. Thank you for your participation.”

APPENDIX G: TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT – RELEVANT ADULTS

“Hello, my name is Rachel West and I am doctoral student at the University of the Pacific. I am working with _____ on my doctoral dissertation research. He/she told me that you have been an influential adult in their educational experience. I was hoping to be able to interview you with some questions I have about _____’s high school and college experiences from your point of view. Is that something you would be willing to do?”

<If yes, continue. If no, terminate call.>

“I will be asking you to participate in one audio recorded face to face interviews of no more than an hour and a half. The study will end [date three months after initial call], and I may need to contact you a few times throughout that time via email or phone for clarification. Is that okay?”

<If yes, continue. If no, terminate call.>

“Great! Let’s work out a time and place for the first interview. I will bring a consent form and we can go over more details. Thank you for your participation.”